DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 248 948 PS 014 460

AUTHOR	Payton, Shirley
TITLE	Developing Awareness of Print: A Young Child's First Steps Toward Literacy. Educational Review: Off-set Publication Number Two.
INSTITUTION	Birmingham Univ. (England). Faculty of Education.
REPORT NO	ISBN-0-7044-0700-0
PUB DATE	84
NOTE	125p.; Revised version of a Master's Thesis, University of Birmingham.
AVAILABLE FROM	Secretary to the Editors, Educational Review, Faculty of Education, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, B15 2TT, England (no price quoted).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research/Technical (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Case Studies; *Early Reading; *Language Acquisition; *Literacy; *Preschool Children; Preschool Education; *Writing Readiness
IDENTIFIERS	*Early Writing; Parent as a Teacher; *Print Awareness

ABSTRACT

This book concerns the growth of a single child, as reported by her mother, from her first encounters with books and print to the beginnings of independent reading and writing. The study took place mainly between the child's third and fourth birthdays, during which period weekly tape recordings were made of story-reading sessions with one or both of her parents. Samples of her writing were also collected, and notes were made of relevant comments. The tape recordings generally reflected the child's spontaneous interest in a particular book and were not taken at fixed times of the day. The mother viewed her child as a maker of hypotheses, active in her own growth, and as someone who tests and amends her comprehension on the basis of varied experiences. (RH)

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DEVELOPING AWARENESS OF PRINT
A young child's first steps towards literacy

ED248948

SHIRLEY PAYTON
With an introductory chapter by Margaret M. Clark

PS 014460

Educational Review
Off-set publication number two
University of Birmingham

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Published by Educational Review,
Faculty of Education, University of Birmingham
Educational Review 1984

Available from Secretary to the Editors
Educational Review, Faculty of Education
University of Birmingham, Birmingham, B15 2TT.

EDUCATIONAL REVIEW
OFF-SET PUBLICATION NUMBER TWO

GENERAL EDITOR BARRIE WADE
ISBN 0 7044 0700 0

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PREFACE

This book is concerned with the growth of a single child as reported by her mother, from her first encounters with books and print to the beginnings of independent reading and writing. The study took place mainly between Cecilia's third and fourth birthdays during which period weekly tape recordings were made of story-reading sessions with one, or both of her parents. Samples of her writing were also collected and notes made of relevant comments. The tape recordings reflected generally Cecilia's spontaneous interest in a book and were not taken at fixed times of the day. A bed-time story routine, for example, had not yet been established.

The following pages reveal the interaction between the hidden complexities of print and the growing competence of a young child actively and enthusiastically seeking to make sense of her world. The reader is able to share some of these insights into the process of learning about reading and writing.

The study was submitted by Shirley Payton, Cecilia's mother, as a Master's dissertation in the University of Birmingham for which I was supervisor. It has been revised for this publication and a chapter added reporting Cecilia's further development up to about five years of age. The introductory chapter I have written sets the study in the context of recent work on the growth of literacy in young children.

We wish to express grateful thanks to Margaret Pallant for her careful typing of the manuscript, to the editors of Educational Review for publishing the book and particularly to Barrie Wade, General Editor, for all his support, to Russ Little of Wolverhampton Polytechnic and his staff for preparing the illustrations, a crucial element in a publication such as this and finally to Cecilia to whom the book is dedicated.

Margaret M. Clark
University of Birmingham
February 1984

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Editors gratefully acknowledge permission to reprint extensive extracts and illustrations from the following:

Cosgrove, B. and Hall, M. written by Kershaw, J. (1974), Sally and Jake on the Farm, W. Collins Sons & Co. Ltd.

Fior, J. (1981), Let's Read the Toy Cupboard, W. Collins Sons & Co. Ltd.

Fior, J. Let's Read the Pet Show, W. Collins Sons & Co. Ltd.

Hunia, F. (1978), Hansel and Gretel, illustrated by A. Dzierzek Ladybird Books Ltd.

McKee, D. (1962), The Adventures of King Rollo, Arrow Books, Sparrow Edition.

Melvill, H. (1974), Four Pigs and a Bee, illustrated by M. Galvani, Dinosaur Publications Limited

Morgan, G. (1979), Flip: the Story of a Seal, wood engravings by P. Reddick, W. Collins Sons & Co. Ltd.

Mostyn, D. (1981), Trains, Macdonald Educational Ltd.

Pilgrim, J. (1981), The Adventures of Walter, illustrated by F. Stocks May, Hodder and Stoughton Children's Books (First published by Brockhampton Press).

Wood, J. (1970), Grandmother Lucy Goes on a Picnic, W. Collins Sons & Co. Ltd.

Rowntree Mackintosh PLC for Smarties label.

A list is given at the end of this book on pages 116 - 117 of all children's literature specifically referred to in the text.

CHAPTER ONE

DISCOVERING PRINT: A CHILD'S FIRST STEPS TOWARDS LITERACY

Margaret M Clark

In recent years there has been evidence of a growing awareness of the insights on learning to read to be gained from close observations of young children's earliest interactions with print prior to the commencement of instruction in reading, or even of school attendance. Also apparent has been a greater appreciation of the contribution of the home at the preschool stage and beyond, and of the out of school environment generally, to the development of literacy. Case studies of the development of young children and indepth studies of children's awareness of concepts of print and understanding of the language of reading instruction are becoming an increasing focus for research. Attention in these studies is being devoted both to the responses of the children to reading and print-related tasks and also to their explanations for their responses whether right or wrong. It is becoming apparent that the range and complexity of language skills possessed by most young children on entry to school is a significant factor in their early development of literacy; furthermore an aspect to which more attention should be paid in planning the instruction in reading in the early stages and beyond. Studies of the development of children's oral language and their interactions with print are revealing an underlying logic in the responses of young children, based possibly on too limited evidence or over-generalisation perhaps, but showing evidence of logical deductions nonetheless of which account must

be taken if they are to remain as active learners. In Children's Minds Donaldson (1978) provides evidence to explain differential responses of young children to apparently similar tasks. The children's search for meaning is apparent throughout as is the influence on their responses of the precise wording of the questions and the nature of the tasks chosen to explore their understanding of a concept. In a more recent publication Donaldson and Reid (1982) consider the implications for the teaching of reading specifically of the evidence of children as 'hypothesis-testers' and as 'rule-users'.

Textbooks on the teaching of reading published in the sixties tended to emphasise the teaching of reading as of a skill which children begin to acquire after entry to school and which is normally mastered within the first two or so years in school; thereafter it is practised, comprehension is extended, and silent reading is acquired. Within such a 'skills-based' model instructing children in reading is seen as helping them to acquire mainly visual skills which will enable them to decode written symbols into their spoken equivalents. Auditory and visual discrimination are seen as of paramount importance and children are seen as in varying degrees of readiness on entry to school: the mastery of reading is, however, seen as something which is acquired in school and as a result almost entirely of the instruction. The importance of the language features of print even to decoding, and the language competence of the children to their understanding of the concepts of print and the

instruction in reading are now being stressed by many writers as neglected aspects, the inclusion of which will make it possible to understand better the reasons for rapid success of some children and sources of failure of others. Coupled with this interest in the language prerequisites for reading has been a concern to study the **process** of **learning** to read rather than merely the **product** of **teaching** reading. One early example of such a study was that by Clay (1969) where she observed and compared the errors during the early stages of learning to read of children making high progress and those who were less successful; their patterns of self-correction were also compared. That focus was evident also in both the title and content of her book published about the same time Reading: the patterning of complex behaviour (Clay 1972).

A further impetus to the reappraisal of the nature of the process of learning to read and the 'critical features' of print was the publication by Smith of the book entitled Understanding Reading (Smith 1971). In that book he analysed the process of reading of skilled adult readers and from that made deductions concerning what the skilled reader does and the beginning reader is trying to do. All of this he presented in a stimulating and challenging way which aroused controversy but also in its wake increasing awareness of the role of language, even in the process of so-called 'decoding' and word identification. Similarities and differences between spoken and written language came under scrutiny by a number of other writers also and with this the 'hidden complexities' of print.

Goodman's description of reading as a 'psycholinguistic guessing game' was frequently quoted (Goodman 1970); reading specialists such as Merritt emphasised the importance of the 'intermediate skills' in reading which were associated with predictions made possible because of an awareness of the form and structure of written language (Merritt 1972). The language of instruction came under scrutiny during the same period, stimulated by an article by Reid in 1966 in which she reported on the understandings and misunderstandings by young children of the concepts of print and terms commonly used in reading instruction. Her findings were replicated and extended by Downing whose own studies, and review of related empirical studies in children's cognitive development, led him to stress the importance of specific aspects of cognitive development to success in reading; views which are reflected in the title and content of his book Reading and Reasoning (Downing 1979). Increased attention is being devoted to the difficulties inherent in written language as a 'distanced' form of communication with its own conventions and sentence structures, the role of the often neglected 'non-content' words in carrying meaning and the need for children to develop understanding of the functions and meaning of narrative text. Authors have attempted to show the importance of these factors in determining the style and content of reading instruction and the materials to be used by teachers (See Reid 1983 for a review of these issues and their relevance to the teaching of reading).

Mention has already been made of the way in which Smith (1971)

directed attention to the lessons to be learnt from studying competent adult readers. My own study of young children who entered school already reading fluently with comprehension and enjoyment, which was undertaken about the same time, was intended to focus not only on the strengths of such children and their homes but also on weaknesses in spite of which they had achieved such early success. This study, published as Young Fluent Readers (Clark 1976) revealed that such children had already much in common with the skilled adult reader. The importance to their progress of their interactions with adults and a variety of aspects of their environment was also apparent. Furthermore, their competence in reading was part of a growing ability to benefit from and to use spoken and written language as a medium for communication which was interesting and challenging. Not only could these children read but most could also begin to represent words in written form. They could spell simple words correctly and make plausible guesses at others, utilizing in this an awareness of the sequential probabilities of English; they were also sensitive to their own limitations. Samples of their written work only a few years later already showed impressive evidence of their growing mastery of the conventions and styles of written language which clearly owed much to their early stimulating encounters with print.

The relationship between reading and writing is receiving growing attention. Reading tended to be regarded as a necessary precursor to writing, as did oral reading to silent reading.

Thus, productive writing was often delayed until there was evidence of competence in reading, although copying of the written products of others, or tracing of words and letters, might form part of instruction in reading. The reciprocal relationship between reading and writing has been discussed by Clay, for example, who suggests that productive writing may itself be of assistance even to young children having difficulty in acquiring the necessary 'concepts of print' (Clay 1980). Smith also has recently turned his attention to writing in as stimulating and controversial a way as he earlier discussed reading; here again in the context of the insights to be gained from studying the competent adult (Smith 1982).

At the beginning of this chapter reference was made to the growth of interest in studying the development of the language foundations for reading in young preschool children. A more recent area of interest has been children's earliest attempts to understand and to produce written communication, even before they are able to read. The work of Donaldson on children's thinking which was referred to earlier owed a great deal to her knowledge of the work of Piaget and to her firsthand experience of working with him. Ferreiro's studies on the earliest concepts about written symbols held by young children and their understanding of reading and writing, reflect similar influences. The work of Ferreiro and her colleagues reported in Literacy Before Schooling (Ferreiro and Teberosky 1982) which has only recently appeared in English translation was started in Argentina. Ferreiro, who like Donaldson has worked with Piaget, has continued this work in

Mexico City. A report of her further work is appearing in a new book entitled Awakening to Literacy (eds. Goelman, Oberg and Smith 1984). It is no coincidence that this volume of papers based on a symposium held in Canada and convened by Smith should have papers by both Donaldson and Ferreiro, that they should both be in the same section entitled 'Literacy and Cognition' (the others contributing to which are Smith, Olsen and Bruner), and that Ferreiro should, like Donaldson, stress the 'underlying logic of literacy development' (Ferreiro 1984). Ferreiro has used a variety of ingenious tasks which with related discussions with young preschool children have enabled her to map the children's developing understanding of what is 'for reading' and the differences between writing and drawing. It becomes clear from her studies that the apparent confusions of children in the early stages, while they may be misunderstandings of the conventions of print, are based on logical deductions from the evidence they have so far encountered. What makes the work of Ferreiro particularly challenging is that many of the children interviewed by her and her colleagues were from so-called 'disadvantaged' backgrounds. While they may have been less advanced than some of their contemporaries they also were making sense of the evidence to which they had access. At a certain stage Ferreiro found children tended for example to require a minimum number of symbols before they regarded something as 'to read', about three symbols. Furthermore they were not satisfied only with quantity they required different symbols to appear in an array before it was for reading. She also explored their

growing differentiation between letters and numbers and between letters and punctuation marks (the latter at an early stage not necessarily differentiated in function from letters). She also investigated in what ways children regarded writing as different from drawing. Their views of the functions of writing were explored from a stage when the two were regarded as interrelated, through a stage when the writing was thought to label the picture to a situation where it was regarded as representative of or descriptive of the picture until finally writing was seen as a convention of a rather different order.

Two examples from these fascinating studies will perhaps capture the nature of the insights gained by Ferreiro through the approach she adopted. One child she realised was not as appeared at first sight using the terms 'letter' and 'number' indiscriminantly: on the contrary the term 'letter' was used exclusively for the symbols in her own name. The second example was her observation that even when children began to appreciate the sequential relationships between spoken words and their representation in print, some children did not appreciate that every word was indeed to be represented in writing. Significantly the words they would expect to be omitted were the short, non-content words, which young children often do not count even when asked to determine the number of words in a spoken sentence.

Several case studies of young children as yet unable to read have provided new insights of relevance to the teaching of reading and

related skills. The two which will be discussed here provide complementary evidence from very different contexts. Cushla and her Books (Butler 1975) is a sensitive description of the influences of stories read to her by her parents on the development of a severely and multiply handicapped young child from infancy. The author of the book, Butler, is the child's grandmother who sets the study in the context of developmental psychology which she was at the time studying in Auckland with Clay. She also uses her extensive knowledge as a specialist in children's books to write a touching and informative book within which she yet manages to keep the necessary detachment when reporting on the ways in which the language of the books helped to stimulate Cushla's early development. Based on diary records and tape recordings this book has insights for parents of all children and for those responsible for the early education towards literacy in the school setting. Cushla's parents started to read to her as a way of passing the long hours of vigil they spent during her frequent hospitalisations. Gradually they became aware of the ways in which these readings were stimulating Cushla and compensating for the limitations put on her other experiences by her handicaps.

The remaining study to which reference will be made is that by Bissex of her own young son between 5 and 11 years of age published under the title Gnys at Wrk (Bissex 1980). The focus in this study is Paul's attempts at written communication before he can read and before he is aware that words have 'correct'

spellings. His development is then traced into his early school career and the influence of home and school on his developing competence is discussed. Paul's mother knew Cazden, Chall and Carol Chomsky personally and was clearly influenced by their work on linguistics and reading: Paul himself was brought up in an environment of books which were clearly absorbing to the adults who surrounded him. An early example of his attempt to attract his mother's attention is quoted when having failed by other means to gain her attention he placed in front of her a card with the letters R U D F, (Are you deaf?)! The growing approximation to English of Paul's attempts at writing is noted as is the existence in the early stages of a predominance of consonants and lack of vowels in his written attempts. An example is given of changes over time in the way Paul attempted to represent a particular word. In the book Awakening to Literacy (eds. Goelman, Oberg and Smith 1984) there is a paper by Bissex in which she considers the lessons children learn from observation of and discussion about their own attempts to communicate in writing. In the same section of the book entitled 'Learning to be Literate' Yetta Goodman also explores the interactions between young children and the print in their environment and their growing awareness of the parts of displays which carry the message (Y.Goodman 1984).

The study of Cecilia which is reported in this book has features in common with the studies by Butler and Bissex noted above. The report is by Cecilia's mother who was already observant of and fascinated by her child's development when she became a student

on a course of study in the University of Birmingham on 'Psychology and the Education of the Young Child'. Since I was her tutor on that course she was made aware of the developments discussed in this chapter and their relevance to understanding children's progress towards literacy. For several of the practical assignments on the course Shirley Payton chose to observe the interactions of her own young child with her parents, with other children, with books and with print more generally. Stimulated by the reports of Butler on Cushla and Bissex on Paul it was decided to make a study of Cecilia's early steps towards reading and writing the basis for the dissertation required for the Master's Degree. From that point tape recordings were made of Cecilia's discussions in story-reading settings, more detailed and systematic records were kept as were examples of her early writings and drawings, their contexts and her observations about them. It was on that material that the dissertation was based. The dissertation has however been adapted for publication and an additional chapter has been added as a 'Postscript' reporting development after entry to school and showing evidence of her growing competence in both reading and in writing.

As will be seen in the following pages Payton claims that Cecilia emerges as a hypothesiser, active in her own growth, and as someone who tests and amends her comprehension with her varied experiences. With apt illustrations from the child's responses to stories, to print and to the world around her Payton demonstrates Cecilia's development as a language-user between

three and five years of age. When Cecilia first read the word 'Co-op', Payton felt that to be a legitimate deduction from the context as was the child's observation:

> 'That says Boots! Why does it say Boots? Did you buy them in Boots?'

Examples of Cecilia's confusion on occasions are also of interest, some of which were either not appreciated at the time by the adult, or were misinterpreted and could not be resolved by the available information. One example was her failure to appreciate the meaning of the word 'wicked' with reference to the queen in 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs' which the illustrations did not help to resolve and yet whose meaning was essential to the story.

Cecilia's parallel growing awareness of the potential in her written communications is related to the other aspects of her development. This is recorded in the illustrations in the following chapters such as for example 'A Letter for you' and 'A shopping list' of whose purpose she shows full awareness in her answer to her mother's enquiry as to whether she will write sweets.

> 'It doesn't matter, we won't forget sweets!'

The importance of written communication to the child in her growth as an independent person is perhaps best summed up in her comment at tea during a dispute as to whether or not she might use a knife to cut her own egg:

> 'I can cut my egg now 'cos I can write my name!'

CHAPTER TWO

HOW DO YOU MEAN?

Readiness for reading constitutes an aspect of language growth and as such may be considered in terms of the individual's development as a user of language. This chapter attempts to examine facets of this development which originate in oral language and through which a range of competencies become established that seem to hold relevance for future literacy.

Mummy I lub you!

Infants are immersed in an oral language environment from birth and learn of its significance through interaction, that is, it is their own activity in varied settings which encourages a grasp of its communicative value. In the first instance this may involve the searching for meaning independent of language, context being the predominant cue but later as experience is extended sounds become associated with sense. McNamara (1972) writes:-

> .... infants learn their language by first determining, independent of language, the meaning which a speaker intends to convey to them by working out the relationship between the meaning and the language. To put it another way, the infant uses meaning, that is non-verbal meaning acquired through his perceptual motor systems, as a clue to language, rather than language as a clue to meaning. (p. 1-2)

As infants respond to increasingly varied situations language becomes of greater note and their own vocalisations are progressively modified to embrace the sounds of mature utterances, particularly those which have generated responses. This serves to reinforce the potency of the reciprocity and

enables a genuinely communicative process to evolve in which understandings and relationships are established that allow further learning to flourish.

The first relationship to be perceived is often the mother-infant bonding in which both individuals strive to get at each other's meanings and the following episode typical of an exchange between Cecilia and myself provides an illustration. The setting was indoors, near to the window, and we were playing together. A movement in the garden disturbed me and as I picked up the infant and held her to the window the neighbour's cat crawled through the fence. I pointed and said 'cat' and the infant followed my gaze, imitated the sound and was rewarded by smiles and a repetition of the word. The child articulated the sound again and seemingly grasped both the significance of the episode and the word. Both participants had brought to bear their relevant past experience of similar situations to form and check the meaning the other intended. Wells (1975) writes of how all available cues, 'intonation, hand and eye gestures, activity in which the speech is embedded, as well as the form of the utterance itself' (p. 114-115) are used to reach meaning.

Although this episode constitutes a seemingly simple interaction there are certain points which demand further consideration. For example, though the child apparently comprehends the word-subject correspondence she may in effect lack reliable means of establishing the exact terms of reference and arbitrarily connect the sound articulated with for instance, the flower pot, the

flowers or anything other than the cat positioned in the direction indicated. Alternatively she may understand the relationship intended but lack the necessary practice to grasp the essence of the word which exploits the experience of generations. Vygotsky (1962) explains the complexity of word acquisition as he describes how to the child a single word is a whole sentence.

> ... the first word of the child is a whole sentence. Semantically, the child starts from the whole, from a meaningful complex, and only later begins to master the separate semantic units, the meanings of words, and to divide his formerly undifferentiated thought into those units. The external and the semantic aspects of speech develop in opposite directions - one from the particular to the whole, from word to sentence, and the other from the whole to the particular, from sentence to word. (p. 126)

In the above example therefore, the meaning of 'cat' to the infant could be 'What a lovely cat,' 'Doesn't he look soft and furry' or 'I wonder if he's coming to play with us?' Considerable activity is demanded in a situation in which almost certainly its full implications cannot be comprehended.

As the infant gains experience of the world Vygotsky conceives of words as changing in conception, that is as perception of the world unfolds there is a continual flow back and forth between word and meaning. In such activity it would seem almost inevitable that at certain times the complexity of language would create cognitive confusion for the infant and in so doing stimulate a need for increased mental activity. This does in fact happen, and the child appears to seek further opportunities for testing the current hypothesis of word meanings. It is this

ensuing activity and interplay that 'permits the child to enter language so quickly' (Bruner 1974 p. 3).

Some of the earliest attempts to hypothesise about word meaning as the infant comes to use language as 'an instrument for regulating joint activity and joint attention' (Bruner 1974 p. 3) concern the use of words in a questioning manner, for example 'cat?' or 'What's that?' (Donaldson 1978 p. 92) and these are strategies which persist and become increasingly conspicuous as vocabulary initially widens and words are connected to form short sentences. Piaget's theory (1969), regarding the activity of the individual in promoting his own learning provides a framework for these kinds of observations. He conceives the infant as being positively engaged in adapting his behaviour through use of innate reflexes and perceptual motor capabilities in interaction from birth (Ault 1977) and also believes that the more the child attempts to do, the more capacious become the foundations for development. In specifically linguistic situations this seems obviously valid for the more the infant tries to communicate and succeeds in engineering a reaction, the greater becomes the facility through experience to assimilate and accommodate hypotheses regarding responses into the cognitive structure. The richer the interaction the greater the opportunity for qualitative as well as quantitative growth.

It is usually in the second year of life that rapid expansion of language begins to take place (Lenneberg 1966) and this may well be enhanced as relationships beyond the immediate family develop

and stimuli become more varied. It was noted for example that Cecilia the subject of this case study was, by sixteen months of age, at about the time she was befriended by a young child a year older than herself, linking words together, (Mummy and Daddy, Mummy's cup). She was also attempting to imitate quite long words (Ce-li-li-a), while before her second birthday she was talking in short sentences (I want it. You hab it. Mummy I lub you). Although at this stage her development was not being meticulously recorded it did seem that it was generally typical of that of many young children.

As children's command of language advances they obviously become more competent in constructing hypotheses and developing strategies for learning. Clay (1972) suggests, that every sentence the child constructs is in fact an hypothesis about language, and either confirms, through the response that is evoked, that the idea could be expressed in that way or not. The following pages are devoted to observations of Cecilia as a user of language and constitute the beginnings of the systematic recordings for this case study. They illustrate her growing capacity to hypothesise and test comprehension of situations and to modify vocabulary, syntax and meaning accordingly.

I'm Cecilia

Cecilia had used language competently for some time now and the first example is typical of exchange in which she reflects on the meaning of a small incident. She and I were returning from a visit to the shops when she makes an observation in the form of a

statement; I supply the expected feedback which allows her to adjust her cognitive activity accordingly.

C. (2-5) There's Bob's car.
M. Yes, that's Bob's car.

In this case the adult confirms that it is indeed Bob's car that has stopped at the roadside close to the shops. If this hypothesis had failed information might well have been provided to enable the child to think again. 'No, that's not Bob's car, his car is blue,' or 'No, that's not Bob's car, don't you remember he's having it mended in the garage to-day?' Sometimes the child searches for meaning with a direct question. In the following incident the word 'park' was being used in a context unfamiliar to Cecilia and she appears struck by its apparent incongruity. She tries to resolve her puzzlement.

M. We'll walk through the car park to-day, it will be quicker

C. (2-7) .... There aren't any swings here, are there?

As she constructs and absorbs new meanings and new words through reaching for the sense of a situation she often experiments with them herself, perhaps not always successfully in early attempts but nevertheless purposefully. Cecilia (2-11) was familiar with the word beautiful for example, but one day it momentarily escaped her as she announced 'I've got cream on my face, I look prettiful.' In a similar undertaking she asked at breakfast one morning 'Is this strangled egg?' The following incident also established her growing capacity to experiment with words. She and I were in the kitchen preparing some custard.

M. Mix it up with the spoon and I'll give you some sugar ... Mix it up

	until it's a nice smooth paste ... is it getting smoother?
C. (3-11)	Yeh.. it is smooth, I disappeared it in .. I disappeared it in.

As the child's awareness of language increases her strategies for seeking meaning improve. Contrary to some current findings for example Lundberg and Torneus (1978), she appears to have realised that language consists of words and that she is able when in doubt, to question their individual meaning. An early example of this accomplishment is featured below. Cecilia is seated on the carpet near to the fire; she appears to be getting rather warm. she comments:

C. (3-11)	Mustn't get too close.
M.	You'll get toasted won't you?
C.	What's toasted?

A further example of some interest was Cecilia's own offer of a word definition. She and I were engrossed in making cakes one afternoon when I noted the time and tried to speed up the proceedings a little.

M.	You beat it up while I get the baking tins ready.
C. (3-11)	That means 'mix', doesn't it?

The meaning of phrases is also determined in a similar manner. Children try them out and rely on feedback in assessing their appropriateness and correctness. For example, when stating on one occasion walking home from the shops 'I'm very tired, my feet are out of breath' Cecilia (3-6) seemed to be seeking confirmation that her word usage was acceptable. Similarly when commenting as she was playing in the garden 'I mustn't step on top of ants must I, I hurt their feelings.' It is in these situations that reinforcement, and particularly adult

reinforcement, is important in enabling children to modify their understandings. Young children also seek through their speech, confirmation for the possibilities they themselves see for language and either accommodate or discard their ideas according to intervention. Again errors are frequently made, but these may be remedied with experience. Past tense verb endings, when the rule has seemingly been acquired but overgeneralised provide an example, and it would seem in this instance that more extensive experience is necessary to overcome the misapprehension. The following examples span a period of some eighteen months.

C. (2-6) Did mummy hided it from me?

C. (3-11) I treaded on that leaf didn't I?

Although the child's grasp of language expands rapidly and overtly through use, it seems probable that comprehension of language situations continue to exceed that indicated by her spoken language repertoire. Clark (1983) notes how parents are quickly made aware of a young infant's ability to understand their private dialogue and it is likely that this facility to comprehend in advance of articulation, may persist even into adulthood. The next episode demonstrates the case in point where although 'polite' was not yet in spoken vocabulary, it was certainly comprehended.

C. (2-6) I want it!
F. You're not being very polite, are you?
C. I don't want to say 'please'.

This comprehension is also significant in that Cecilia in her statement attempts to conclude the incident. As far as she was concerned the situation was straightforward, she had made her

needs and her attitude clear. If this had not been so however and confusion had occurred it would seem on the basis of her proven ability to hypothesise and reach meaning, she would have evoked further activity or commented further. For example on another occasion she reasoned aloud 'I want one 'cos I haven't got any so I want one.' (Cecilia 2-6).

As the child becomes more articulate she does appear to develop her reasoning powers and at times these provide an insight into her thought processes. The following conversation arose from discussion about a family photograph. Cecilia tries to put her knowledge in context, to accommodate information into her mental schema.

C. (3-2)	Mum, can I see your mummy eh? One day?
M.	One day, I can show you a picture of my mummy.
C.	Your mummy's in that picture there (points to picture on the wall).
M.	That's my grandma.
C.	Where's your mummy?
M.	I haven't got a picture here, but I'll find one for you.
C.	Mummy, mummy, I got, mum, daddy, mum, daddy's my grandmother but I'm not grandma, I'm Cecilia!

Language is becoming used for an increasing number of functions and it is this issue which is raised next.

What's round the corner?

It is believed that children learn language and its uses simultaneously, that is, they perceive its functions through understanding the situations in which it is practised. This is

becoming clear in the above observations but grows even more pertinent as the child's language proficiency is seen to progress.

One of the earliest uses to which language is put is the self-maintaining purpose, for example, 'I want,' and this had already been perceived, but the general power of speech as a means of control may be examined further. Luria (1971) (see also Joynt and Cambourne 1968) a student and follower of Vygotsky, suggests this behaviour is evident in three broad stages. He claims there is progression from children's inability to use speech to direct their own behaviour, to a stage in which this facility is acquired, to a final development in which the actual semantics of speech becomes more dominant and the individual's speech demonstrates internal rather than external control. The following incident provides an illustration of the second stage in which Cecilia's audible self-instructions appear to be assisting with her activity or in Luria's terms, motor activity is being congruent with the semantic and phonetic aspects of verbalisation. Cecilia is involved in drawing a picture of her friend Sally (Fig. 1).

C. (2-11) I'm going to draw Sally .... ears ... ears ...ears and mouth, this is mouth, eyes, eyes ... hair and legs .. she's got slippers on .. there.

This facility to use speech to control behaviour is gradually reflected in behaviour with peers. There is a transition from the natural egocentricity of early infancy to the more detached behaviour of which children become capable as they strive to

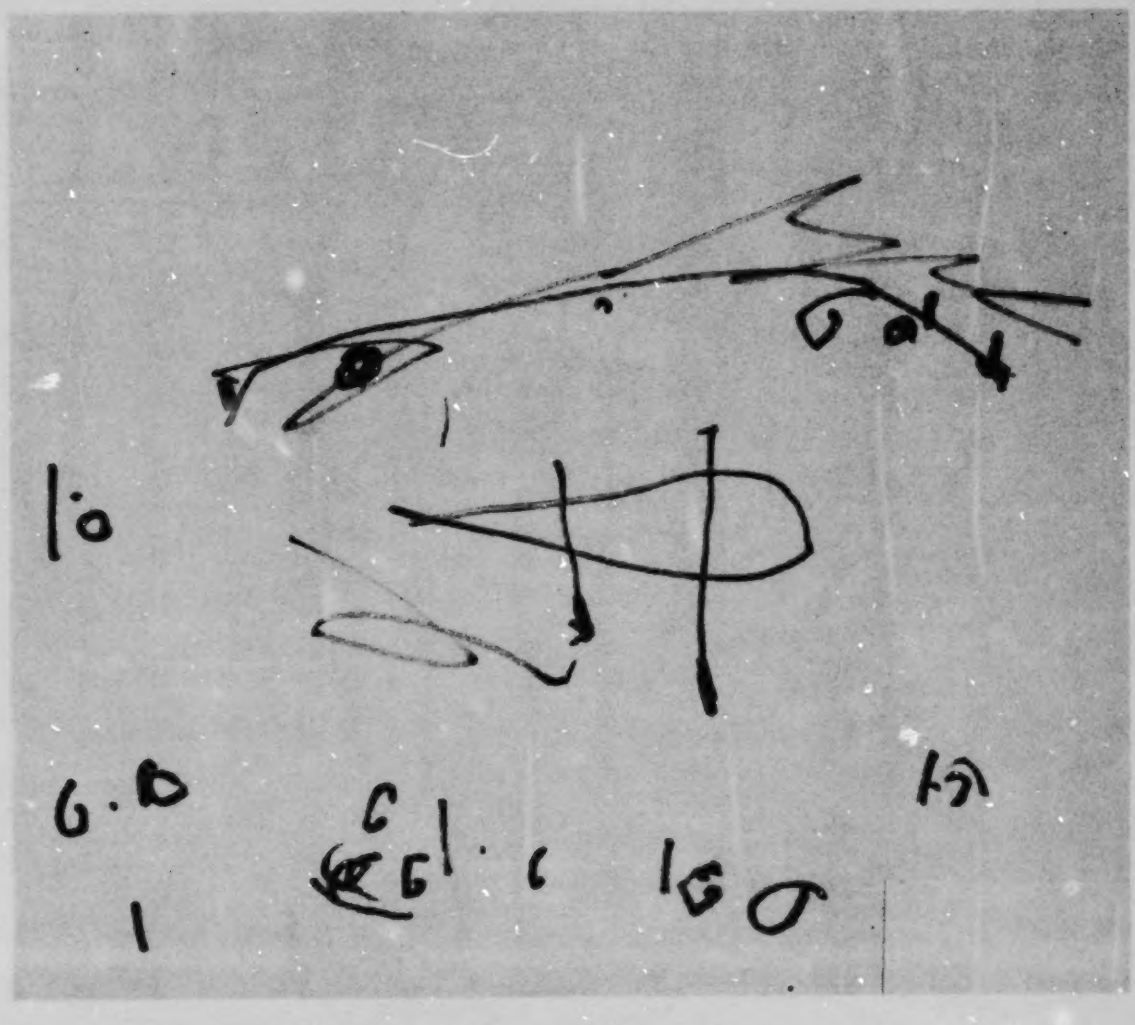
Figure 1 Sally (C. 2-11)

Ears - circles near top

Mouth - big 'circle'

Hair - wavy line

Legs - two vertical lines 'slippers on'



maintain a relationship with another individual. In the following episode, Cecilia is making her own wishes clear but at the same time succeeding in initiating and directing a sequence of events.

C. (2-11)	I want to play nurses.
S. (3-11)	Where's your nurses' things?
C.	I haven't got any nurses' things to put on. Haven't. You have to put these clothes on, haven't got any special things. Put these under here ... Right, get all the dollies and things.

Another exchange provides a further illustration. This time Cecilia is not quite so successful in controlling her peer's behaviour but none the less the proceedings are amicable. She is seated at the table with her friend Sally playing with some plasticine when she inadvertently drops a piece on the floor which mother subsequently finds.

C. (3-2)	.... Oh, I got some on the carpet. Can you pick it up for me?
S. (4-2)	You pick it up.
C.	You pick it up.
S.	I don't want to.
C.	Right then, shall I leave it on the carpet then ....? Well in a minute you don't want to pick it up, when you made your food (i.e. with the plasticine) when you, when you made your supper. (Both laugh).

As children learn to use speech to control their own behaviour and to guide that of peers, they similarly become aware of the possibilities for extending this proficiency to relationships with adults. In the following incident, as Cecilia and I are on our way to the shops, valuable insight regarding this potential, although not explicit, seems to be in the process of being established.

C. (2-11)	What's round the corner?
M. (surprised)	What do you think is round that corner?
C.	It might be the sweet shop!

It is at this stage of development in which increasing competency in self-direction and control over others is achieved, that more prolonged interaction develops in which speech comes to be used for other purposes. Greater collaboration towards an agreed end or the ability to act sensitively towards another individual and ultimately appreciate her point of view are two examples. Such linguistic awareness seems to evolve naturally through the medium of play and the following extract illustrates one occasion of such co-operative activity in a play situation. Cecilia is walking round the room carrying her doll; she puts it on the armchair and covers it with a blanket. Cecilia's friend is on the rocking horse nearby.

S. (3-8)	I've got a rocking horse like this I have but it's in the garage.
C. (2-8)	You got a horse in the garage?
S.	Yes. But it's a bit ... it's a bit nasty to me, it is.
C.	You have my horse.
S.	It's a bit nasty to me my horse is.
S.	It's nasty to you?
S.	Yes. It's naughty my horse is.
C.	Naughty? You like my one?
S.	Yes.
C.	Have that baby. (C. picks up the doll from the chair and gives it to S. S. gets off the horse and puts the doll on the chair and covers it up).
S.	Pretend this is our baby and she sleeps there.

Although the opportunity for interaction with peers provides valuable experience during the early years, of greatest significance is the quality of exchanges and this is most likely

to be stimulated through communication with adults. Vygotsky (1928) maintains that it is adult direction which provides the determining influence on the maturational level of the individual to produce development and this is supported in more recent research by Tough (in Chazan 1973). She believes that it is the fostering environment in which mothers try to catch the meaning of what children say that leads them on to use language for a wider range of purposes. The following conversation is an example of interaction initiated by an adult which allows the child an opportunity to pause for reflection and incidentally, to resolve a minor disagreement with her peer.

Adult	What did you have for dinner?
S. (3-11)	... um ... soup.
A.	Did Ceci eat her soup?
C. (2-11)	All up, all up.
A.	What flavour was it?
C.	Pomato.
A.	Pomato? Tomato!
S.	Pomato.
C.	Chicken.
S.	Pomato.
C.	Not, not tomato, chicken.
S.	It's pomato, it was pomato.
C.	No it wasn't, it was chicken.
S.	It was pomato.
C.	It was ..... sausages (both laugh).

It is within such situations as those described above that the child's language potential is realised, in each instance she has brought to bear her past experiences to the communicative process and in so doing achieved fresh insight. It is suggested that it is these growing competencies which are taken with her into other language situations such as the world of print, and which serve to effect achievement there also. This hypothesis forms the subject of subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER THREE

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

The rapid growth of oral language in the early years of life has been viewed in the previous chapter through a child's activity and experience and Cecilia has been seen to increase her powers of hypothesising and predicting the language intention of others. As this continuous development flourishes it appears to expand spontaneously to encompass the world of print and this forms the subject of this present chapter. It focuses on Cecilia's realisation of the potential of print both in situational contexts and in her own beginning attempts at writing.

Does this say 'smarties'?

The first consideration is that concerning the child's susceptibility to the influence of situational print. Cecilia has been immersed in an environment full of print (labels on clothes, grocery items, shop signs, street names, etc.) similar to the way in which she has been open to the influence of oral language from infancy. Of concern here is the extent and period of development at which the print is discerned. Unlike the deliberate interaction between infant and articulate, responsive children and adults, print is passive, there to be noticed or not. That it is eventually perceived is incontrovertible. The following incident marked the earliest recorded response of its kind to occur and suggests that Cecilia had been actively involved with the printed word long before it was recognised. She and I were queuing at the checkout in the supermarket and as

I emptied the contents of the basket on to the counter, Cecilia indicated the writing on a price ticket and correctly remarked 'That says Co-op.' This incident regarding the function of print on the part of the child appears as a notable piece of deduction and its achievement heralds the beginning of a new era of development.

Using this example as an illustration, the first point to be made regarding the accomplishment is that as far as was known Cecilia had neither previously asked or been told the word. It appeared to be a genuine inference. Secondly and of considerable importance is that what had been discussed in many typical everyday conversations were the day's shopping requirements, where they were to be purchased, how the journey should be made and so forth, that is the contextual information. It is argued therefore that it is these exchanges which prepared and created the necessary climate for the comment to be made, in similar manner to the way in which sense had been constructed in oral situations before. Here also the child hypothesised, analysed and finally formulated a proposal. On the basis of Smith's suggestions (1971; 1978) nobody would verbally offer the child a cup of cocoa and give her orange juice and similarly 'Co-op' would not be inscribed on every ticket in a store of a different name. 'An utterance is usually related to the situation in which it occurs.'

A further event of a similar kind also occurred about this time. Cecilia and I were walking down the street when the child clearly

pointed to a sign board outside the row of shops being approached and requested an ice cream. Although deduction regarding the sign's meaning in this case was probably much easier in that the board contained all the contextual cues of pictures, colours and design. Possibly also reactions of other persons to it had been observed in the past. Nonetheless the same principles were still operating to secure information and to enable its confirmation and accommodation.

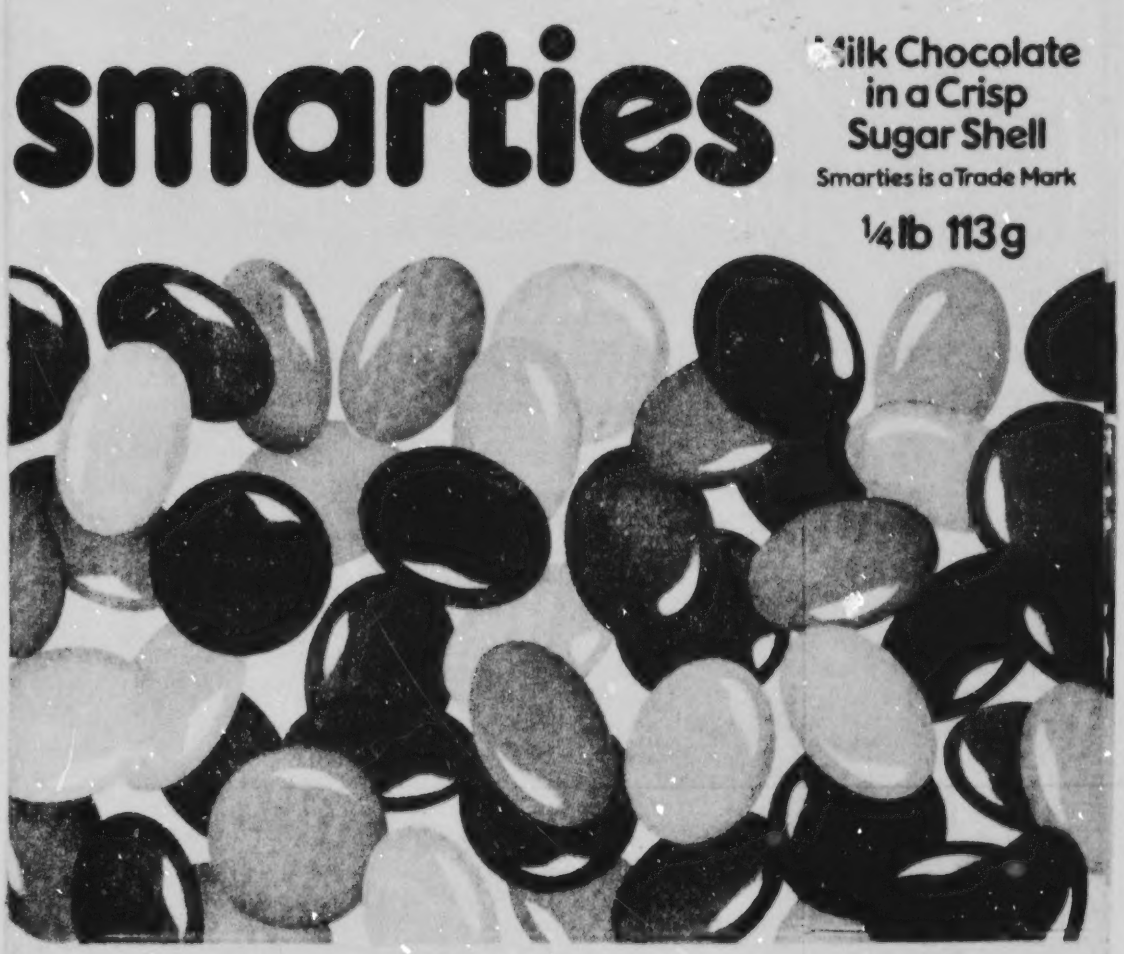
Although in many cases the child's hypotheses in these kinds of circumstances prove acceptable there are instances of error, especially as the child rapidly increases the capacity for acquiring knowledge. Some months later, Cecilia (3-4) stopped by the street sign at the end of the road, ran her finger over the letters and said 'Cuckoo Hall Lane.' It was not Cuckoo Hall Lane in fact but 'Winton Close' but nevertheless she was actually aware of the kind of message print in this situation was likely to convey and the mistake made sense. As it happened this incident provided an opportunity for further learning, for Cecilia, puzzled at the rejection of her hypothesis, pointed again to the letter 'C' at the beginning of 'Close' which enabled the explanation, that many street names can and do start with that particular letter.

The part played by contextual cues seems obviously important at this early stage of print awareness and various researches in recent years have supported its significance. Hiebert (1978)

found that meaning given to words did derive from their environmental context rather than conventional word recognition processes and Goodman and Altwerger (1981) in a small-scale but detailed study with pre-school children, noted the sharp decrease in the percentage of appropriate responses to labels on everyday household goods and items when less and less context was available. Also they observed that the older the child, the greater the frequency of pertinent responses. It would seem reasonable to assume in this case that considerable experimentation by the child is taking place between the ages of three and five years, the ages of the subjects in their research project, to enhance greatly proficiency which may be typical of other young children. The following events provide some insight into Cecilia's activity concerning situational print at the beginning of this period.

The first observation to be included, is an apparently straightforward incident given the type of expertise which she appears to have developed to date, but is quoted to reinforce the fact that this kind of hypothesising is prevalent, that is she appears to seek confirmation for those propositions about which she is already fairly certain as a means of verifying and extending her knowledge. Cecilia (3-5) was given a packet of smarties and as she clasped them in one hand her attention was drawn by the print on the design (Fig. 2) 'Does this say smarties?' she asked and ran her finger under the word. She had recognised the purpose of print and was hypothesising regarding its meaning. In a manner noticeably like that by which insight

Figure 2 Does this say 'Smarties'? (C. 3-5)


smarties
Milk Chocolate in a Crisp Sugar Shell
Smarties is a Trade Mark
¼lb 113g
INGREDIENTS: Milk Chocolate:Sugar: Wheatflour:Edible Starch:Flavourings: Glazing Agent,Carnauba Wax:Colours.
Rowntree Mackintosh plc York Y01 1XY England
D/EN 532
NP

regarding early oral vocabulary is acquired. In terms of Smith's argument again, the box is hardly likely to be decorated in a suggestive, bright smartie pattern but have unrelated words impressed upon it.

The next instance is similarly concerned with meaning, which in this case is not so obvious. However the child has the means at her disposal to check on information she is given to assist her comprehension and uses it; she notes the print, knows it holds the solution to her curiosity and specifically questions about it. The explanation provided is apparently inadequate to secure cognitive adjustment and she demands to see the subject of the conversation in order to verify the hypothesis she is likely to be concurrently constructing. The incident takes place in the bathroom as Cecilia notices a new bottle of shampoo on the shelf. She reaches out to examine it.

C. (3-3)	What's this called? You tell me the words.
F. (reads label)	..... clears dandruff.
C.	You show me inside.

The third episode to be quoted took place as Cecilia was apparently engaged in imaginative play. She calls out to me in the kitchen.

C. (3-5)	I've got my matches ...
M. (comes into room)	Oh, those aren't matches, they're staples. Did you take the box out of mummy and daddy's drawer?
C.	They're my pretend matches ... (examines box). That says 'Boots'.
M.	You're right, it does say 'Boots'.
C.	Why does it say 'Boots'? Did you buy them in Boots?

In this case there is no general environmental context to support comprehension of the written language but the print and design is presumably being recognised from past encounters and the child knows from previous experience that it is likely to be there for a purpose. She reasons accurately about this.

A letter for you!

As the meaningfulness of both oral and printed language becomes more firmly established with each experience, there appears to be an accompanying awareness in children of its potential for their own written efforts. Children's scribbles often start at an early age and it was at the age of two and a half years that their significance to Cecilia was first observed, although the 'writing' had started well before this and she herself had frequently requested 'Write Mummy' or 'Write Daddy'. On this particular occasion she was noted to be making marks on the paper with great concentration and I asked 'Are you drawing a lovely picture?' The reply came quickly, 'No, I'm writing a 's' for Sally.' For her a link between a sign and its meaning was being demonstrated with an insight into the function of her own print as a means of communication. As Goodman (1980) remarked, the first letter of a child's name becomes the symbol of the word itself.

It is from these early attempts to write, that letter forms emerge, particularly as the pleasure of making permanent marks, not only on paper but in many other places around the home gradually encompasses a more specific realisation regarding their

possibilities to convey messages. At first these efforts may be understood only by the children themselves and even for them the meaning is soon forgotten (Read 1975) but yet the initial intention is clear. A form of scribble that is often found in the writing of two to three year olds is the 'O' form and Clay (1975) comments on this. She notes that when 'O' is joined roughly it may produce 'an overshoot p, and undershoot u, and a spiraling effect 6.' This has been clearly perceived in early examples of Cecilia's writing (Figs. 3a, 3b, 3c).

As the child gains practice in writing, messages are often proffered by her. They appear as crumpled pieces of paper, presumably representative of the folded letter which arrives through the post. The example below was presented by Cecilia to me as 'a letter for you' and the small oblong type shape on the right hand side was described as 'a church full of people'. Her age at the time was three years and two months.

Figure 3a **A Letter for You.** (C. 3-2)

Of particular importance to children during these developments seems to be confirmation that the print they make serves a genuine purpose. On one occasion for example when Cecilia (3-9)

Figure 3b

An early example of Cecilia's writing. (C.3-2)

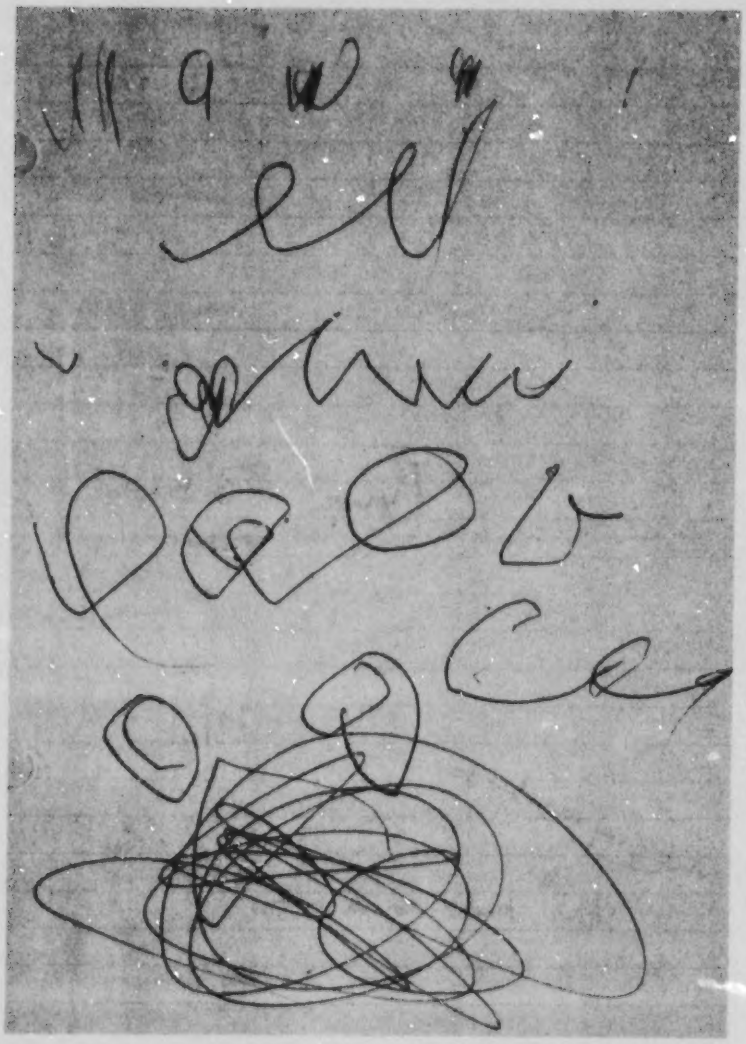
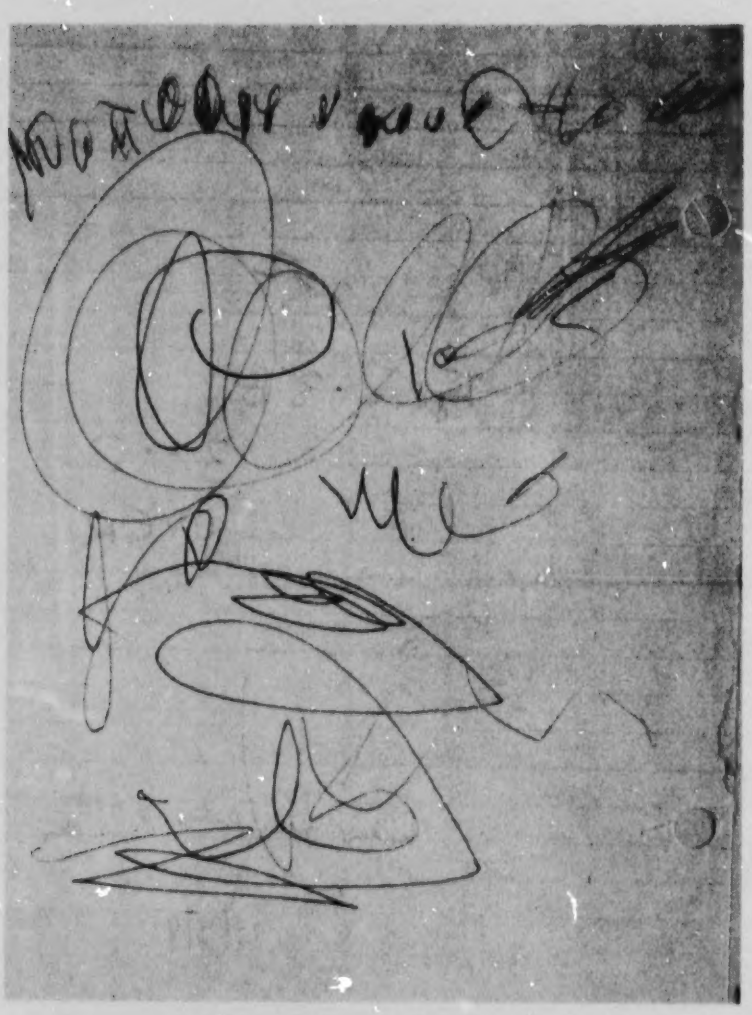


Figure 3c

An early example of Cecilia's writing. (C. 3-2)



announced that she was going to make a shopping list and I asked if she was intending to write 'sweets', she replied, 'It doesn't matter, we won't forget sweets'. It was unnecessary as far as she was concerned to write it on a list at all. On another day she brought a picture to me saying 'All the people in the house.' Being in a hurry I glanced and said in passing 'Oh, whose house is it?' I was told sharply 'You know whose house it is, Cecilia, Mummy and Daddy' the implication being that if I did not know, something must be wrong, the printed number '10' was not fulfilling its function (Fig. 4).

During this stage of language growth, drawing and writing seem to be closely intertwined in the child's mind and a communication often contains some of each. Goodman (1980) quotes a delightful example of a four year old child writing a reminder to herself to put the tongue of her shoe buckle in the fourth hole of her sandal so that it would not be too loose or too tight and Cecilia (3-4) has similarly although not so explicitly, combined the two skills in many of her various attempts to correspond. Figure 5 provides an example, together with the conversation that accompanied her effort.

The close link between drawing and writing is also noted by Goodman and Altwerger (1981) in their research with pre-school children which indicated that none of the three year olds were verbally able to indicate the difference between writing and drawing and only one three year old was able to correctly identify drawing as opposed to writing. The four and five year

Figure 4 <u>All the people in the house</u>. (c. 3-9)

C. 'All the people in the house'

M. Oh, whose house is it?

C. You know whose house it is (indicates no 10). Celia mommy and daddy.

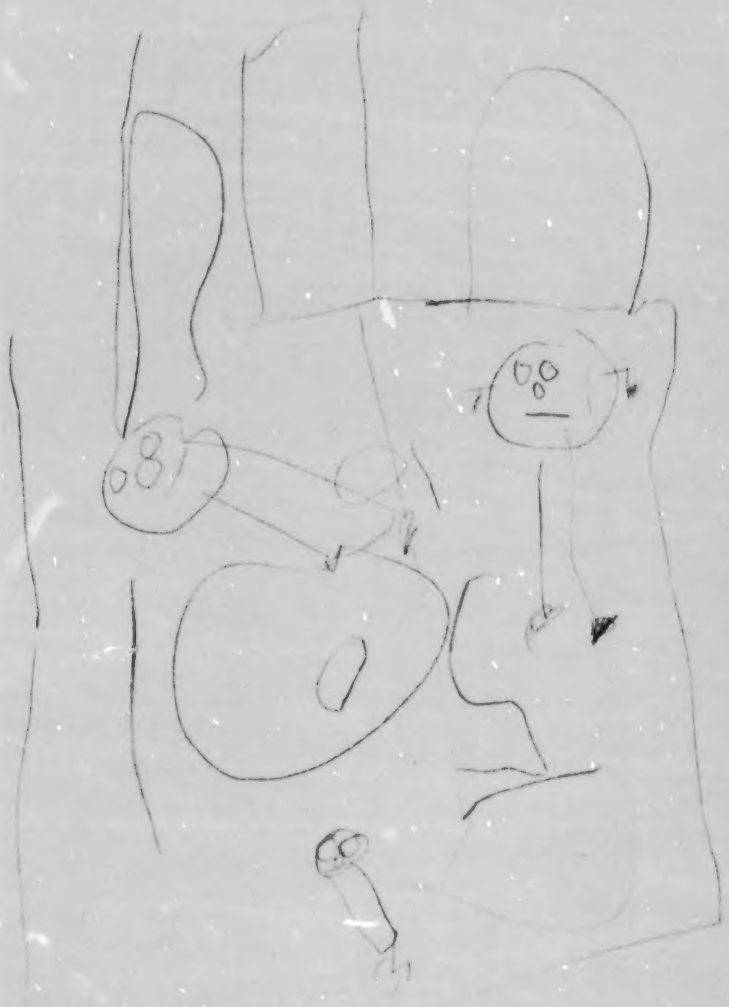
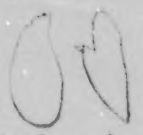


Figure 5 A Shopping List.

C. I'm going to make a shopping list.

M. Write matches.

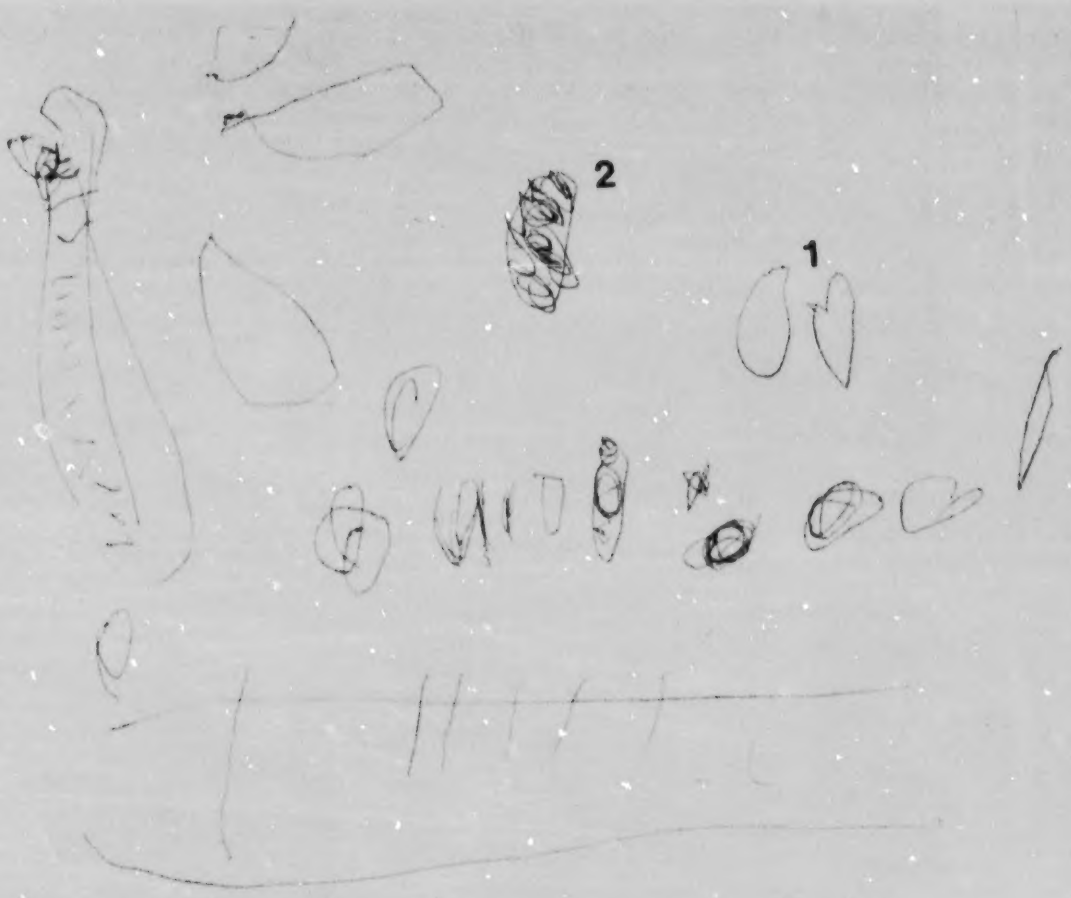
C. All right. (Draws  indicated by 1. Is that matches).

M. Not quite.

C. (Draws shape indicated by 2.) I'm putting the matches in.

M. Try Ribena.

C. (continues writing)



olds however were generally better able to indicate either verbally or by pointing to their own production that there is a difference between writing and drawing.

As the child's daily experiences broaden, self knowledge regarding the appropriateness and function of print increases. Halliday (1975) affirms that 'just as oral language meanings are developed and used in ongoing everyday experiences so written language is learned through functional use.' This use is often supported and extended by the child's own observations of others using print in a variety of situations which become models. One morning for example I was carefully watched by Cecilia (3-3) as I hastily scribbled a 'no milk to-day thank you' message to the milkman and the comment was 'You're writing a letter to Grandma aren't you. Thank you for the nice dress!' Figures 6 and 7 show two of Cecilia's own efforts at communication some months later. The first is described as 'a letter to my friend' inviting her to a 'pretend party' and the second 'a letter to the Bishop' which appeared to be stimulated by a television Jackanory programme. It is interesting to note in both cases the recurring letter 'C's, typical of a child who knows only a few letters or words and uses them as a short cut to a long statement by repeating the same symbol again and again (Clay 1975), and in addition the segmentation of the scribble which possibly marks some insight regarding the segmentation of printed text. The C's in this instance are of course particularly well established as the first letter of Cecilia's own name.

Figure 6 A letter to my friend. (C. 3-8)

Writing a letter to Sally inviting her to a party.

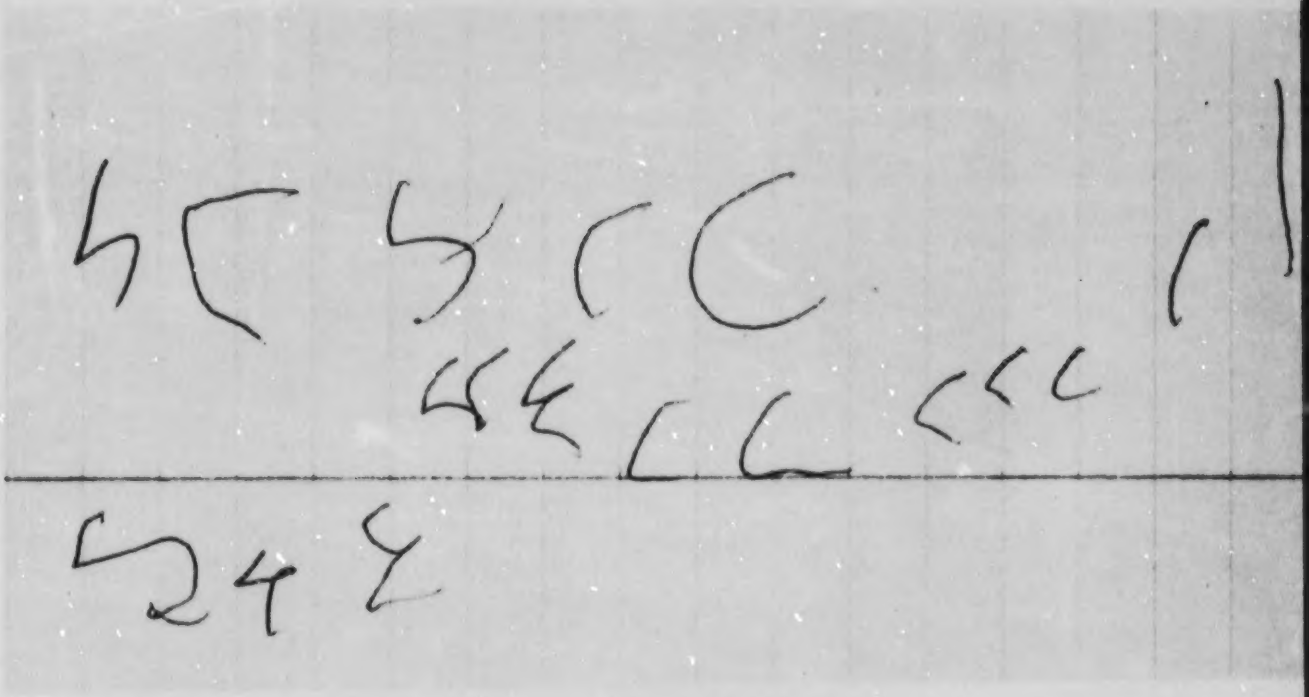
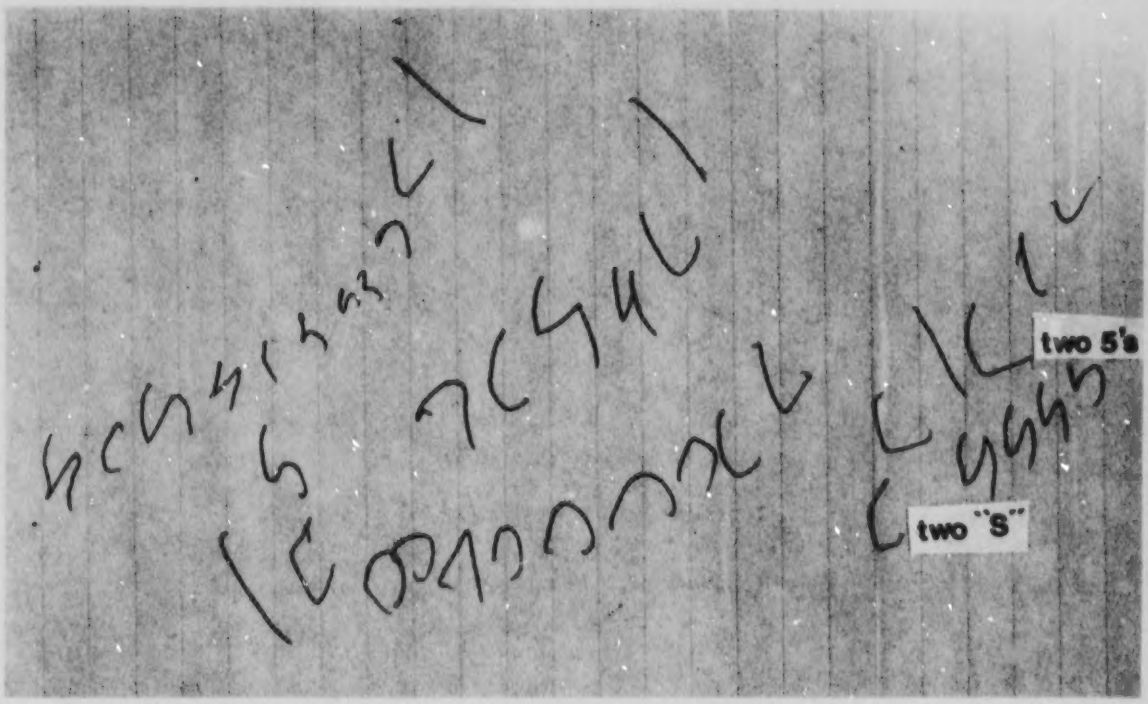


Figure 7 A letter to the Bishop. (C. 3-8)

Writing a letter to the Bishop.
(Bishop in Jackanory story seen
on T.V. this afternoon).



Possibly one of the most difficult concepts which the child has to acquire in her learning about language is that regarding the division of speech and print into words. That this is a developing notion, even in these first years, has been observed in the previous chapter with respect to oral language, but now needs to be considered with regard to print. Although little evidence concerning the child's insight has been offered, one or two incidents reveal that such an understanding is evolving. At the age of three years for example, Cecilia was observed simultaneously saying aloud and writing 'Three blind mice,' each word being represented with a stroke on the page. Similarly at three and a half years, the numbers '8-4-9-5-1' part of the home telephone number was mumbled to herself as she recorded each digit with a mark. These activities appear to resemble those described by Goodman (1980).

The final aspect of the child's early writing to be raised in this chapter concerns its use more particularly as a means of reinforcement for new learning experiences. On the way to nursery school one morning Cecilia (3-7) remarked about the path that had been cleared through the snow in the playground and asked 'Who moved it?' I replied that it was probably the school caretaker and the word 'caretaker', obviously new to her, was repeated in various babbling-like contexts later in the day presumably in an attempt to get at its meaning. Eventually she was observed scribbling, and in reply to my interest in the writing I was told it says 'caretakers, schools, colleges'.

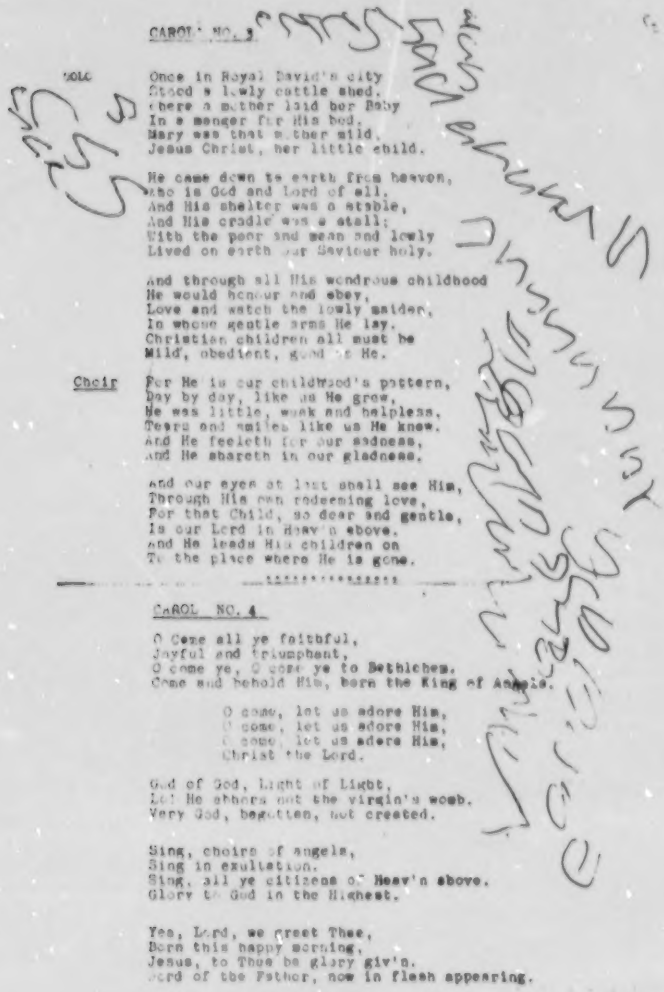
Another occasion about the same time concerned the words of a song on tape which had been borrowed from the library with the accompanying booklet. Cecilia (3-8) was frequently heard singing it around the home until one morning she spontaneously recorded her version on paper. 'Mummy this says "someone's crying, someone's singing, someone's praying Lord, Kumba yah" (Figure 8). It is interesting to observe that as in many other instances about this time, Cecilia shows a preference for writing on paper already containing print rather than a clean page, although there never appears to be any attempt at copying letters or words.

The child's increasing understanding of the potential power of print is now becoming obvious and it is this insight that is examined next with respect to story text. Chapter Four explores Cecilia's interaction in the story reading situation as her ability to participate is more firmly established.

Figure 8

Someone's crying, someone's singing, someone's praying Lord, Kumb yah. (C. 3-8)

C. Mummy, this says someone's crying, someone's singing, someone's playing Lord Kumba Ya.
(A song she had become very fond of and sings all the way through).
Note she still chooses to write on side with writing.



CAROL NO. 3

SOLO Once in Royal David's city
Stood a lowly cattle shed,
Where a mother laid her Baby
In a manger for His bed.
Mary was that mother mild,
Jesus Christ, her little child.

He came down to earth from heaven,
Who is God and Lord of all,
And His shelter was a stable,
And His cradle was a stall;
With the poor and mean and lowly
Lived on earth our Saviour holy.

And through all His wondrous childhood
He would honour and obey,
Love and watch the lowly maiden,
In whose gentle arms He lay.
Christian children all must be
Mild, obedient, good as He.

Choir For He is our childhood's pattern,
Day by day, like us He grew,
He was little, weak and helpless,
Tears and smiles like us He knew.
And He feeleth for our sadness,
And He shareth in our gladness.

And our eyes at last shall see Him,
Through His own redeeming love,
For that Child, so dear and gentle,
Is our Lord in Heav'n above.
And He leads His children on
To the place where He is gone.

CAROL NO. 4

O Come all ye faithful,
Joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem.
Come and behold Him, born the King of Angels.

O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.

God of God, Light of Light,
Lo! He abhors not the virgin's womb.
Very God, begotten, not created.

Sing, choirs of angels,
Sing in exultation.
Sing, all ye citizens of Heav'n above.
Glory to God in the Highest.

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee,
Born this happy morning,
Jesus, to Thee be glory giv'n.
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing.

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CHAPTER FOUR

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

Critical to Cecilia's development in the varied language situations discussed to date appears to have been her persistent search for sense; she has observed, hypothesised, predicted and analysed. Against this background of cognitive activity this present chapter is concerned with concurrent and further interaction in the story reading setting, for it is such experience which specifically introduces and establishes concepts of book language and storyness and which is ultimately likely to stimulate growth towards the reading process itself. Two aspects are examined, first the effect of existing cognitive operations in this different context and secondly the child's own individual communicative and creative interpretation of storyness and story reading.

Beds in flowers?

Cecilia has grown up in a literate environment and from an early age has been naturally immersed in books. She has looked at them, handled them as the interest has taken her and 'studied' them as stories have been read. It is from these story reading sessions, shared and close experiences between parents and child that the following observations have been made.

The first example serves as an introduction to the opening premise that a keen search for meaning permeates each event and

it is quoted at length to enable the potential demands of the story and their effect on the child's cognitive activity to be recognised. On this occasion the book was fairly familiar to Cecilia, being one of a series of tales about the animals at Blackberry Farm. It concerns Walter the duck who decides one day that he is tired of swimming in the same old pond at the farm and goes off to explore new territory. On his way he meets first with a friendly lady who feeds him crusts, secondly a number of brown ducks who are not so friendly and who chase him away, and finally a large Black Dog.

M. (reads)	Then suddenly he saw a large Black Dog asleep across his path. Walter was alarmed. The only dog he knew was Rusty the Sheepdog, and he was a friendly dog. But he had heard that some dogs like to chase ducks. "I must creep round him very carefully," he thought, "without waking him up. Then I shall be all right." And he began to creep very carefully. And he did creep very carefully, but one feather from his wing tip must have tickled the Black Dog's nose, because he suddenly opened his eyes and saw Walter.
C. (3-2) (Looking at picture).	Why's he picking him in his mouth? Eh?
M.	Well listen to the story and see what it says.
(Reads)	Now the Black Dog did not know that it was Walter Duck from Blackberry Farm. He thought Walter was just a lost white duck and that it was his duty to catch lost white ducks and take them home.
C.	Why's he, why's he putting in his mouth?
M.	Well he catches Walter and he puts him in his mouth and he's going to take him home. He thinks Walter's lost.
C.	What for does he?

Figure 9. Why's he picking him in his mouth? Eh?

NOW the Black Dog did not know that it was Walter Duck from Blackberry Farm. He thought Walter was just a lost white duck and that it was his duty to catch lost white ducks and take them home. So, in a second, he had lifted Walter up and was carrying him carefully in his mouth down the path towards the village.

The Adventures of Walter - Jane Pilgrim.
Pub. Hodder & Stoughton Childrens Books.
(First Pub. Brockhampton Press.)

M. Well, he's never seen this duck before. So he thinks, "Here's a strange duck, he must be lost, I'll take him home." So he picks him up and puts him in his mouth.

(Reads) So in a second, he had lifted Walter up and was carrying him carefully in his mouth down the path towards the village. How Walter quacked and wriggled! He wasn't hurt, but he was very frightened. When would he see

C. (looking at picture) Why's there tees .. te . um raindrops, down his cheek?

M. Why are there tears down his cheek? He's crying.

C. Why?

M. Well he's frightened. He doesn't know what this big black dog's going to do to him.

C. What for does he not?

M. Well, he thinks perhaps he's going to eat him, or carry him away to some place he doesn't know.

(Reads) When would he see his dear little pond again? Two large tears rolled down his beak. It was then that Rusty met them.

"Whatever are you doing with our Walter?" he asked the Black Dog, and the Black Dog had to put Walter down before he could answer. Walter did not wait to hear the answer. He was off down the bank and into the river, swimming as fast as he could away from the village, and home to Blackberry Farm.

Rusty found him waddling down the lane past the old oak tree where Mrs Squirrel lived.

"It's all right, Walter," he told him "That Black Dog would not have hurt you. He's a friend of mine. But next time you go exploring, I think you had better come with me, and I will look after you."

Walter was very glad, and to find Mother Hen waiting for him. "The world is a very exciting place," he

told her. "But I like Blackberry Farm best. I think I shall stay here for a long time." And he waddled happily into his own dull muddy water.

C. Read it again.

(The Adventures of Walter)
pub. Hodder & Stoughton, 1981.

First published by Brockhampton Press

Cecilia's participation in this extract although quite sparse is typical of that maintained in many story reading and language situations recorded over a year or more after the third birthday, and provides an example of the cognitive strategies used in a period of sustained concentration to search out meaning. It raises two important issues, the child's questioning and the demands of the text.

First, Cecilia's questioning seems to reveal on brief examination, a predominant interest in the text's pictures, 'Why's he putting in his mouth?' 'Why's there tees .. te . um raindrops, down his cheek?' It seems as though the bright colours, clear design and so forth are stimulating prime consideration, or viewed in an alternative way, are functioning as distracting stimuli in that they draw attention away from the printed text (Singer, Samuels and Spiroff 1973-1974). Whilst these assumptions may be valid a further possibility exists which becomes clearer as the questions are considered in relation to the text, that is, that they are derived from a breakdown in text comprehension; this is the second point of concern.

The first question which demonstrates this possibility is that following reading of the word 'catch'. Though this matter has been raised by Cecilia before it appears to indicate a general lack of understanding regarding the concept of animals being caught. Catching a ball for example is a familiar use of the word but not catching a duck. The second example is that after the word 'frightened'. In this incident the picture of Walter crying and the text itself demands a mental connection which is not made by the child, that is she is unable to deduce that Walter's tears are the result of fear. Kirkland (1978) in discussing Piaget's work in relation to reading suggests that in fact young children in the pre-conceptual period of development are not as yet able tc reason inductively or deductively but only transductively and this may partially explain Cecilia's confusion.

As more stories are examined it appears that the requirements of print for deductive reasoning are generally prevalent and this is of considerable significance not only for her cognitive strategies in analysing text but for her efforts in bringing meaning to print. Smith (1971) suggests that language is understood by having 'meaning brought to it' and this would indicate that for the child without the appropriate knowledge or experience, the means to make inferences or to process naturally beyond the information given is limited. Figures 10 and 11 provide two further examples of episodes in which simple deduction is necessary for full comprehension. In the first

Figure 10. He's dirty that duck.

M.	(reads)	One duck on the river. Two ducks by the coal.
C.	(3-2) looking at picture	He's dirty that duck.
M.		.....Mm.
C.		What's he been doing?

Two ducks by the coal

Four Pigs and a Bee.
Pub. Dinosaur Publications 1974.

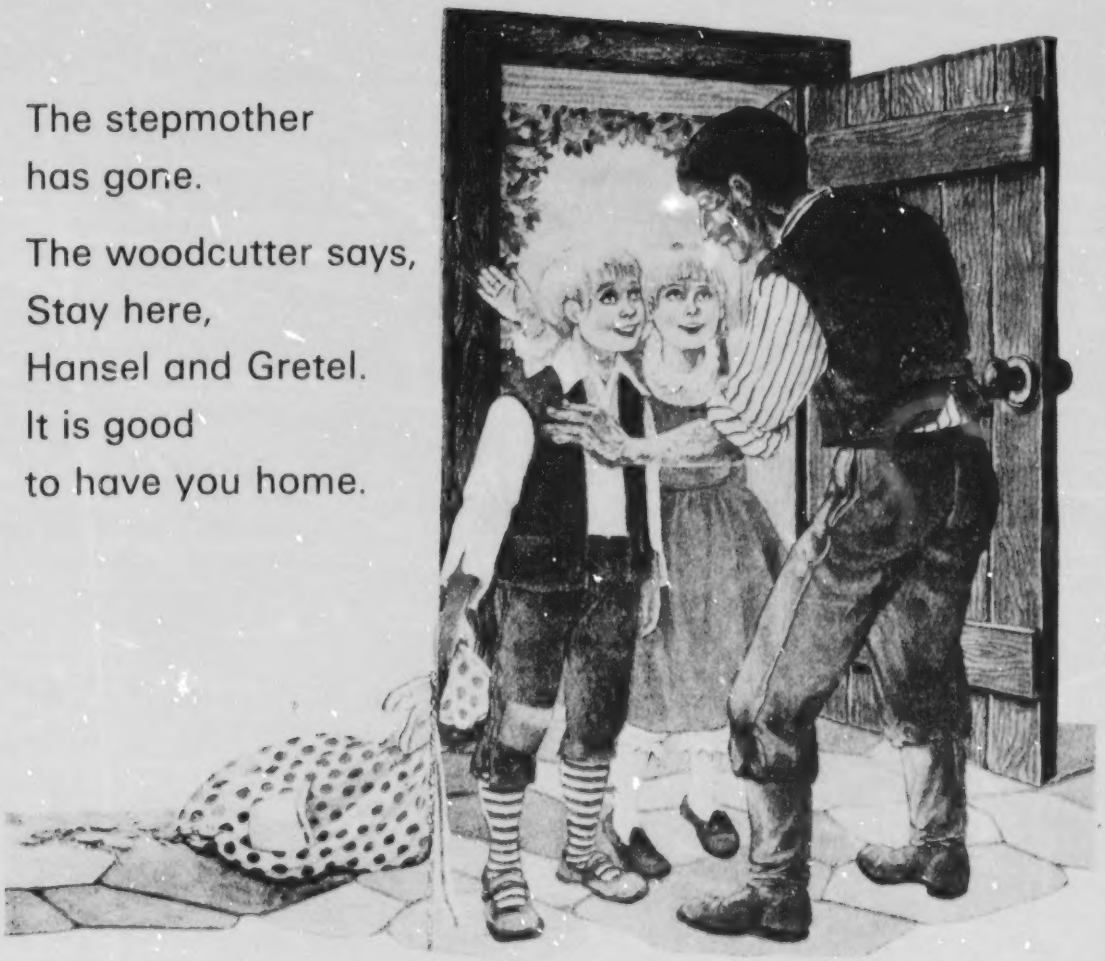
Figure 11. That's 'is daddy.

C. (3-5) points to picture — That's 'is daddy.

M. — That's right, thats Hansel and Gretel's daddy. He's very pleased isn't he, that they have managed to come home.

The stepmother
has gone.

The woodcutter says,
Stay here,
Hansel and Gretel.
It is good
to have you home.



Hansel and Gretel.
Pub. Ladybird.

incident Cecilia searches for the meaning of the illustration. She has, however, some difficulty in relating the coal dust on the duck to the heap of coal at the duck's side. In the second example she establishes that 'daddy' and 'woodcutter' are the same person, the text using only the latter word on this particular page.

It is now becoming clear that Cecilia searches for the sense of a story in a similar manner to that with which she seeks for meaning in other language situations, and here likewise increases her proficiency with experience. Examining further episodes it was found that she has developed the ability to indicate very precisely, by making specific reference to words or phrases, the root of her cognitive confusion as the following extracts illustrate. In the first one Cecilia is hypothesising about the meaning of the word 'cinder' which judging from her suggested interpretation must be causing considerable difficulty in her comprehension of the story.

F. (reads)	... burnt to a cinder.
C. (3-7)	A nice little doll, cinder?
F.	Cinder? Cinderella?
C.	Cinder doll.
F.	Sindy doll, no it's not a sindy doll. A cinder is a little piece of burnt up wood or something.

(Hansel and Gretel)

Secondly, Cecilia is audibly reasoning about the term 'flower bed' and this causes her some amusement. In retrospect it seems unlikely that my explanation would further her understanding significantly.

M. (reads)	... the Afghan hound was far too swift. He dragged Malcolm into the park, in and out of the trees and over the flower beds.
C. (3-8)	Flower bed?
M.	These are the flower beds in the picture here ... It says flower beds, there (indicates words).
C.	Flowers, beds, beds in flowers ..?
M.	It means little patches of the garden.
C.	Mm.
M.	They call them beds, flower beds.

(Messy Malcolm's Birthday)
pub. World's Work Ltd. 1978)

This interest of the child in specific words has been commented on by various writers (Lomax in Clark and Cheyne, 1979; Donaldson 1978) but generally to the effect that it is not very widespread. Donaldson writes:

> It is a striking fact that when young children listen to stories they very seldom ask questions about the language in which stories are told. They ask many searching questions about the intentions and motives of the character, the structure of the plot - if you like, the meaning of the story. They rarely ask about the meanings of words, even when these must clearly be unfamiliar. (p. 91)

It is suggested that the different findings with regard to Cecilia are attributable to two main causes, the setting and the relationship between reader and listener. Lomax, for example, in her research, was involved with groups of children in the nursery school where it is unlikely that the close relationships encouraging the observations discussed above would exist. The one to one situation is conducive to talk and allows time for reflection as the conversation below illustrates. Cecilia interrupted my reading to remark on the accident of that morning

which was obviously of greater concern at this time than the story.

C.	(3-1)(looking at her hand)	Mum the skin's come off, in't it?
M.		Yes you fell over this morning didn't you. Is it still a bit sore?
C.		Mummy.
M.		Mm?
C.		Where's all the skin what, what was on there?
M.		Well it's all curled up just there .. Shall I finish reading this?
C.		No, I just want to talk to you now.

Even with such advantageous conditions as those that sometimes exist in the home, opportunities for assisting the child's comprehension may still be overlooked. As the next episode was re-examined this became apparent; it seems that a search for the meaning of the word 'wicked' was taking place which at the time was not realised:

F.	(reads)	There was once a wicked queen who had a magic mirror.
C.	(3-9)	She's nice ain't she? (Refers to picture of queen).
F.		Mm, very pretty. She's got a crown on her hair, look.

(Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs) pub. Zokeisha Publications Ltd. 1968

Although reference to the child's participation has been discussed mainly in terms of Cecilia's analysis of events or the striving to attain the gist of a situation, another aspect appears to be operating. It also is concerned with the writer's intention but in a synthesis of context, a creation of a secure and vivid background for the story action. The child questions

and hyothesises but in effect to broaden her knowledge of the situation. Some impression of what I mean is contained within the extract below and it is of note that the underlying questioning strategy in this instance may well be determined by a need of the child to relate the happenings of the story to her own experience. Cecilia is encouraged to enjoy flowers but not to pick them randomly and the contradiction here may be of some concern to her; more contextual information is thus being sought.

M. (reads)	She liked to visit her grandmother who lived in the middle of the wood.
C. (3-1)(looking at the picture on next page).	Mummy, what she pick those flowers for her grandmother for?
M.	Well Grandma isn't very well is she, so she's having to stay in bed. Red Riding Hood is going to see her Grandma and she knows that Grandma likes flowers so she thinks she'll pick some and take them to Grandma.
C.	She's picking them.
M.	Yes, she is picking them.
C.	Is she picking all of them.
M.	No, just a nice bunch that she can hold in her hand .. a bunch that will look nice in a vase.

(Little Red Riding Hood)
pub. W. Collins Sons & Co. Ltd. 1970.

This predisposition to bring reality to the story situation is reflected in many 'theories' of cognitive growth. Piaget for example is concerned with the individual's facility for incorporating new ideas into existing schema by relating new information to that already accommodated and similarly Ausubel (1968) describes how new learning which is potentially meaningful to a child becomes meaningful by being related to what the child already knows. In the following, Cecilia comments on the picture of the tools and particularly the sharp edged saw which she knows

she would be unable to handle (Fig. 12).

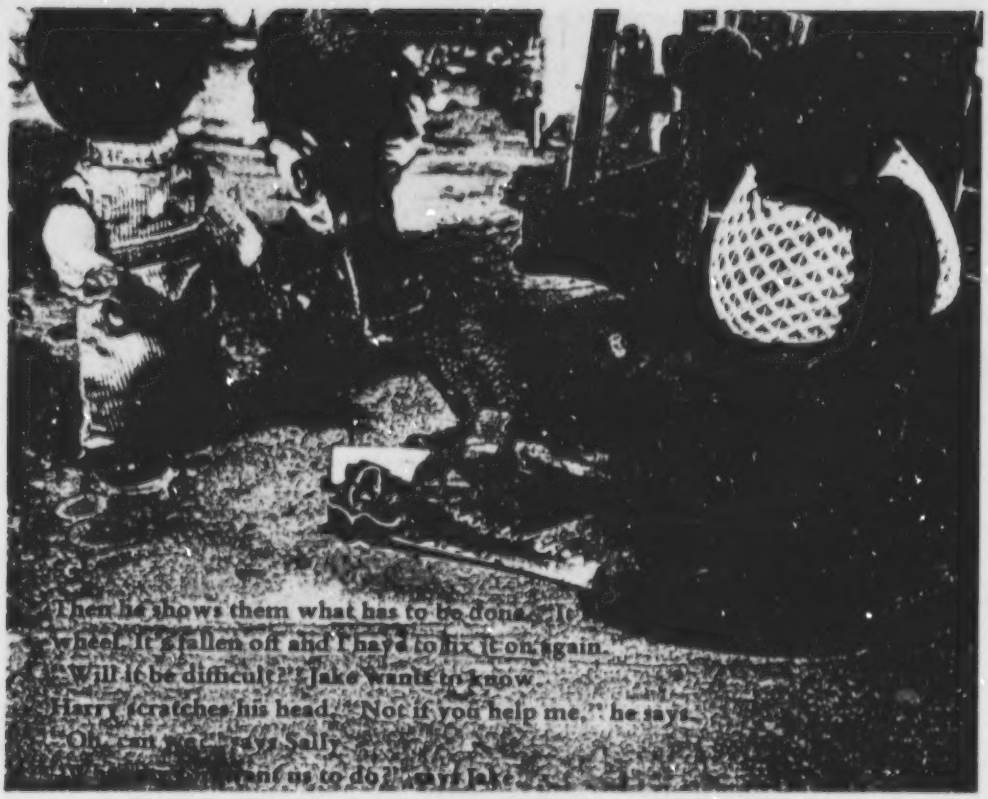
M. (reads)	Sally asks him how the repairs are going. "I've not really started yet." he says. "I have to find all my tools first, you see." Then he shows them what has to be done. "It's this wheel. It's fallen off and I have to fix it on again." "Will it be difficult?" Jake wants to know. Harry scratches his head. "Not if you help me," he says. "Oh can we?" says Sally. "What do you want us to do?"
C. (3-6) (points to saw).	Sally can't have that can she?
M.	No she can't, I wonder why ... Why do you think she shouldn't have that?
C.	It's sharp.
M.	That's right, it's a very sharp saw, you can see all the toothed edges along there, can't you ... yes, that's for Harry to use.

(Sally and Jake on the Farm)
pub. W. Collins Sons & Co. Ltd. 1974

One Morning . . .

As context is more fully established and the child's knowledge increases, she becomes naturally more proficient at predicting events. Smith (1982) suggests that the basis of language comprehension is in fact prediction; that is, the listener anticipates what the reader might say in order to understand what he does say. As Cecilia becomes familiar with particular stories her participation takes the form first of contributing precise words, and then whole phrases of the text, showing that an awareness of the permanence of print is being established. Although this sharing of the story does not in fact necessarily guarantee its full comprehension in most cases an understanding is suggested through miscues which tend to retain the essence of

Figure 12. Sally and Jake on the Farm.


Then he shows them what has to be done. "It
wheel. It's fallen off and I have to fix it on again.
"Will it be difficult?" Jake wants to know.
Harry scratches his head. "Not if you help me," he says.
Oh, can we," says Sally.
tells us to do?" says Jake.

Sally and Jake on the Farm.
Pub. W. Collins Sons & Co. Ltd. 1974.

the writer's intention. In the following extract for example, Cecilia replaces the word 'coddle' with 'cuddle' a more familiar term.

M.	(reads)	He didn't look where he was going and
C.	(3-11)	fell into a puddle, puddle.
M.		Plop
C.		Plop
M.		like
C.		this.
M.		A frog
C.		sat in the puddle and laughed
M.		Qua, ha, wait
C.		till you grow and then you can crow.
M.		"Wait till you grow, before you can crow," that's right.
	(reads)	The frog looked like this and the wet chick like this. Now speckled hen ran to her chick. She warmed and she
C.		cuddled him
M.		coddled him like this.

(Good Morning Chick)
pub. Julia MacRae 1980

As familiarity with the story becomes more marked it seems possible for the child to participate overtly to an even greater extent, that is, with a wholistic rendering of the text. This was first observed in Cecilia's development at the age of three years two months, but after a relatively short period the technique was abandoned. Goodman (1980), writing about wholistic remembering suggests that it is a 'significant stage of reading development and not simply memorisation' (p. 20) and that 'it provides evidence that children know the essence of storyness.' That it does indeed furnish information regarding the child's concept of storyness, both in 'reconstruction of meaning' and flow of events is clear but its consequence for later language growth as yet appears uncertain. The extract below is Cecilia's rendering of The Tiger Who Came to Tea (W. Collins and Sons Ltd.

1968). She maintains the substance of the story and reveals knowledge of 'storyness':

C. (3-3)

One morning Sophie and her mummy was having tea in the kitchen. Who, who can that be? It can't be the milkman cos he came this morning. It can't be the boy from the grocer's cos this is day he comes. Can't be daddy cos he got his key and he can open the door key. Sophie opened the door and a big furry stripey tiger (turns page). Oh, forgot the last bit (turns back). Excuse me, I'm hungry, do you think could have tea with you? Course * like a bun. The tiger didn't take one bun, he took all the buns ... do you like a drink? He ate all, he drank the drink. All the milk in the milk jug and all the tea in the tea pot, nothing left to eat on the table. He still looked hungry. He looked round the kitchen to see what else he could find. He ate all the saucepans cooking in the .. all the * tins in the cupboard all the water out the tap, all the orange juice. Thank you for my nice tea. I think I'd better go now, so he went. Sophie's mummy, I don't know what I can do. I have no supper for daddy's supper, tiger eaten it all. Sophie, Sophie couldn't have a bath cos all the tiger had ....

* Not identifiable from the tape.

A further example is included (Fig. 13) in which Cecilia 'reads' The Pet Show by J. Fior. Her attempt this time is recorded together with the original text, the marked lack of responses in the example indicating where several pages were turned together by her without awareness. She exhibits a manner described by Clay (1972) as 'talking like a book'.

Figure 13 **Let's Read THE PET SHOW**

Jane Fior. Pictures by Gill Chapman. Pub. W Collins Sons & Co. Ltd. 1981

Cecilia (3-2)	(Text	Let's Read The Pet Show
	(Response	Let's Read The Pet Show
	(Text	I have got a lot of pets. Let me introduce you to them.
	(Response	---
	(Text	This is my cat Sam. Sam likes looking out of the window. I think he is looking at the birds.
	(Response	---
	(Text	He also likes to watch TV.
	(Response	Sam likes watching tele.
	(Text	Lily is my dog. Lily and I go for walks. Lily looks very fierce but she isn't really.
	(Response	This is my, me, me and Lily go out for walks.
	(Text	These are my goldfish. I won them at the fair.
	(Response	---
	(Text	It must be boring in the bowl now. They don't seem to mind.
	(Response	It must be boring in the bowl now. They don't seem to mind.
	(Text	Buns, my rabbit, lives outside. He has a hutch in the shed.
	(Response	Buns my rabbit lives outside. He has a hutch in the shed.
	(Text	When it's sunny, he comes out to play, but I have to make sure that he doesn't run away. He'd like to eat the plants next door.
	(Response	When he comes out to, when it's sunny he comes out to play but I make sure he don't run away.
	(Text	Every morning, before I go to school, this is what I have to do .....
	(Response	Every morning, when I get up in the morning, this is what I have to do .....
	(Text	I have to open the door and let Lily out for a run,
	(Response	I open the door and let Lily out for a run,

Figure 13 Continued

(Text	I have to pour some milk in a saucer for Sam,
(Response	I pour some milk in for Sam,
(Text	and I have to take Buns some carrots to munch.
(Response	and I, I take Buns some carrots to munch.
(Text	Lily tries to drink Sam's milk.
(Response	Lily tries to drink Sam's milk.
(Text	Sam tries to eat Lily's meat.
(Response	Lily tries to eat Sam's meat.
(Text	Oh, I nearly forgot the goldfish.
(Response	I f'nearly forgot the goldfish.
(Text	Now I can go to school
(Response	---
(Text	We've got pets at school too. In my classroom we've got a hamster in a cage.
(Response	In our hamster we got a guinea pig,
(Text	and the Infants have got a guinea pig.
(Response	---
(Text	We've decided to have a pet show. We'll all bring a pet to school, and then we'll have an inspection.
(Response	We all bring a pet to school. Then we have inspection.
(Text	I don't know who to take.
(Response	I don't know who to take.
(Text	Lily is so big.
(Response	Lily's so big....
(Text	Sam is so shy
(Response	Sam's so shy ...
(Text	The goldfish might like it, but my friend George is taking his goldfish.
(Response	The goldfish might like it but my friend George is taking his goldfish.
(Text	I think I'll take Buns. Do you think he'll win a prize?
(Response	Think I take Buns, win a prize?

Although wholistic remembering was a strategy soon discarded by Cecilia, actual interest in 'reading' was maintained. She was observed from time to time, sitting with book on lap, turning the pages and uttering sometimes incoherent mumbo-jumbo but often print related phrases. The following is one attempt to supply narrative to a non-fiction book about trains. The text reads as follows and Cecilia's version is recorded below it.

Trains (pub Macdonald Educational Ltd 1981)

The railway station is busy today
Some people are catching trains
Others are buying tickets
Everybody is hurrying

Some trains are not going very far.
They are going to the nearest town.
Other trains are going
Hundreds of kilometres.
People can sleep and eat on these trains.

C. (3-8) One day there was a man going to work and children going on holiday. There's the train, there, others getting tickets. Now one morning the man started to go with the boy. The * very difficult * wheels on .... and this train didn't know what to do, the traffic stopped. Um, after the story. Now the trains, big trains and little * didn't know what to do.

The response to different kinds of text is of some interest in this context for it is not always those with wide ranging vocabulary and flexible expression that necessarily inhibit or encourage the child's enjoyment. It was found for example that Cecilia's participation on one occasion was restricted by the limited vocabulary and repetitiveness of a story; the print which simply stated 'Here are Hansel and Gretel' and 'Here is Hansel

and Gretel's father, the woodcutter' seemed positively to create confusion.

C. (3-6) p. 4 Here are Hansel and stepmother. Here are Hansel, where. Here are Gretel. Here are Hansel, here are Gretel.

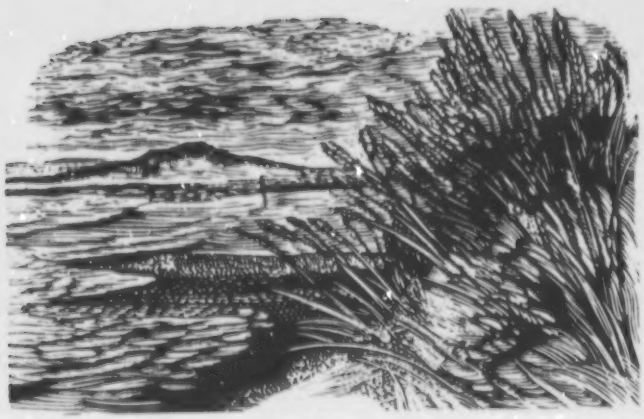
p. 6 Here are Hansel, here's, here Hansel and Gretel, here's 'is father's woodcutter.

(Hansel and Gretel)
Ladybird Publications 1978

However the value of such texts lies in their greater encouragement to the child to become aware of word conformation and this heralds Cecilia's further development. At three years nine months she called excitedly to mother, 'Oh mummy, look at this funny book, it's got the same letter' (Fig. 14). She was in fact referring to two words and not letters, but the message was clear, her perception of print was being demonstrated. As Merritt (1972) notes, although it is the prediction processes or what he describes as 'intermediate skills' that stimulate an appreciation of the essence of language, it is the attention to letters, words and phrases within this understanding that brings the child closer to the reading process itself and which is of necessity a primary skill. This is considered in the next chapter.

Figure 14. Look at this funny book.

C. (3-9) Oh mummy look at this funny book, it's got the same letter (see second and third lines from foot of page; words marked).



I

It was very still in the dawn light. The night shadows glided silently away before the widening streaks across the eastern sky, leaving a thin white vapour of mist over the marsh. Already the geese had left the tidelines to flight in and settle on the stubbles behind the sea wall. As the light grew over the sea the creeks, twisting into the dark green vegetation of the marsh, began to stir with the flood, and isolated flocks of waders gathered to feed along the moist flats of mud and sand at the edge of the tide. From the distant stalk edges, across grey gullies and silvery pools that patterned a cloak of emerald samphire, sea aster and sedge, the faint call of a curlew reached the sea wall.

As the lonely cry died away two figures reached the top of the embankment from the farm track below. The man was tall, broad, with a mop of unruly dark hair that he shook

Flip, the story of a seal - Geoffrey Morgan.
Pub. W. Collins & Co. Ltd. 1979.

CHAPTER FIVE

HOW DO I WRITE?

The varied and extensive accomplishments of the child's development illustrated in the previous chapters has been emphasised essentially as a product of her own activity; she has consistently sought, mediated, and constructed meaning. This chapter observes through the child's own participation her growing responsiveness to the specific characteristics of language with its complexities and featural peculiarities which inevitably brings her closer to the reading process itself.

That says ..... doesn't it

Some reference to Cecilia's understanding of the segmentation of speech as she has explored meaning and attempted to reconstruct stories has been indicated in Chapters Two and Four and attention is now turned more particularly to her awareness of a relationship between this segmentation and print. As many story-reading situations have been examined it has become apparent that concurrent with oral perception of word boundaries, a parallel understanding of a correspondence between sound and word has been developing. This has emerged as the child has actively participated in stories and taken the initiative in questioning ambiguity and formulating hypotheses. The following quotations provide an introduction to some of her earliest interaction with books in which speech and print have become associated. It is pertinent that each episode constitutes a learning experience in which she is engaged in constructing and testing hypotheses to

advance her knowledge. She appears aware of lines and phrases of print and of word correspondences and to have developed effective strategies for establishing their identification. In the first example she is seeking confirmation that a phrase of orally memorised text matches a line of print.

C.	(3-3) ('reading' to herself)	....it blew inside out ... Reading a story to you. Swept it up, joined the umbrella .. then boy with kite, then a *, there's Matilda, there's Mr White with his umbrella .. That says 'swept it up to join the umbrella', doesn't it?
M.	(looks up and crosses room)	Let me have a look and I'll tell you what it says.
C.		There (points).
M.		It says 'And not content, it took my hat and still not satisfied with that'.

(The Wind Blew)
pub. Picture Puffins 1978

* Not identifiable from the tape.

In the second extract she appears to be anticipating a word which occurs in the text. She knows from previous readings that it exists in the print somewhere and asks about it.

M.	(reads)	The car shot backwards into a tree.
C.	(3-3)	Quaw, quaw. Where it say 'toot'?

(Meg's Car)
pub. Picture Puffins 1978

Thirdly, in a similar manner, she questions the use of the word 'Heidi' which encourages her to verify spontaneously a further hypothesis.

F.	(reads)	Soon Peter came down the mountain with the goats. He was pleased to see Heidi too. They talked and talked. Then Peter had to go home.
C.	(3-3)	Where, where, where does it say

		'Heidi'?
F.		It says 'Heidi' there .. a big 'H'.
C.		There it says 'Peter'.
F.		Where?
C.	(points to word)	There.
F.		Yes!

(Heidi)
pub. Ladybird Books Ltd. 1979

As the child extends her experience with books, actively interacting with the printed word, it may be expected that her knowledge of oral and print relationships and word structure itself would naturally expand. Pick et al (1978) for example, have suggested that as the child begins to question and to ask 'What does it say?' knowledge regarding the concept of a word becomes generally clearer. The above examples reveal this strategy in action and it is one which has persisted until the present time. Although not an intensive activity it becomes slightly more prevalent for a short period at about the age of three and three quarter years. She appeared to question more frequently, jabbing her finger sometimes randomly at a page of text or sweeping it under a line of print. The following episode reveals a certain growth in word conception as she uses a self-correcting strategy which simply illustrated her awareness of the precision of print. I read the story title 'Billy Goats Gruff', Cecilia questioned, 'Where, what does it say?' and was then able to indicate accurately each of the three title words. When the story was completed and requested for a second time Cecilia realised that her attempt at word matching was not accurate enough, making a remark to this effect and correcting herself.

M.(reading book title)	Billy Goats Gruff.
C. (3-10)	Where, what does it say?
M.	What does it say where?
C. (indicates word)	Billy.
M.	Billy.
C. (indicates words)	Goats, Gruff.
M.	That's right it does. Good girl. (turns to title page) What does it say there again ...?
C.	(indicates each word) Billy - Goats - Gruff.
M. (reads story)	
C.	Do it again.
M.	Do it again? Will you help me?
C.	Yeh.
M.	Right. What's the title?
C.	Billy Goats Gruff. And do it on there. (Turns back from title page to front cover).
M.	Is it on the cover too?
C.	(Sweeps finger under words) Bily Goats Gruff.
M.	That's right, Billy Goats Gruff.
C.	I done it wrong didn't I? (indicates each word). Billy - Goats - Gruff.

(Billy Goats Gruff)
pub. Ladybird Books Ltd. 1977.

Although these incidents reveal the child's developing insight into the explicit nature of print and its potential for precise communication it is still unclear how this recognition is achieved. In the above example for instance various words are identified, one quite spontaneously, but no cues are given by the child as to how this cognitive processing is effected. Throughout her participation in story-reading and language situations generally however from time to time certain observations regarding the stimulus properties of print have occurred, that is the features which are actually being attended to. These will now be discussed.

B.one.u.w.g.e.t.s. (Blankets).

Various researchers have set out to determine the basis of word recognition but the results have not always been compatible or conclusive. Marchbanks and Levin (1965) for example, found that for children who are not skilled readers specific letters are of greater significance than word shape, especially the first and last letter of each word. Rayner and Hagelberg (1975) suggest that word shape is of particular conseqence especially to beginning and skilled readers. However, as was indicated in this latter investigation, the term 'word shape' is itself open to question. Smith (1971) reflects this awareness in his theory described as a 'Feature-Analytic-Alternative' in which it is intimated that word features themselves integrally involve features of letters, a sequence of letters and the distinctive features of letters which children have to establish for themselves as distinctive features by comparison with other configurations. To assume that children are competent to do this however is to infer that some knowledge of letters exists which has not yet been shown for Cecilia in the examples quoted so far. As will now be shown such evidence is available, both in Cecilia's oral observations in general interaction and story reading, and in her attempts at written communication.

Many young children seem to acquire knowledge of letters without any direct teaching (Goodman 1980) and this appears to have happened here. Through natural exposure to print in the environment, simple picture alphabet books and reading material generally, Cecilia has absorbed letter information which though

by no means complete or infallibly established reveals the competence of her own cognitive activity. For instance one day she was washing her hands in the bathroom when she noticed COLD embossed on the tap. That says c - o - l - ... she announced, waiting for assistance with the capital D, and on a prior occasion when she was just three years old, she pointed to the word FARE on a bus poster and remarked 'That's Friday'. Through such interaction an understanding of what is known by the child becomes clearer as also do her developing strategies for acquiring new knowledge. The following episode provides a further example, this time from a simple words and picture book. As Cecilia scrutinised the pages she pronouncced that 'blankets' said 'towels'. As this suggestion is refuted she proceeds to consider each letter as a means of determining meaning. This constituted the first occasion on which such an approach had been observed and revealed not only her awareness of directionality and some letter features but a new means of examining a word.

C. (3-9)	Towels
M.	No, not towels
C.	What does it say then?
	B.one.u.w.g.e.t.s.

That this method of word consideration is now being adopted may have been encouraged by a reciprocal interest in writing.

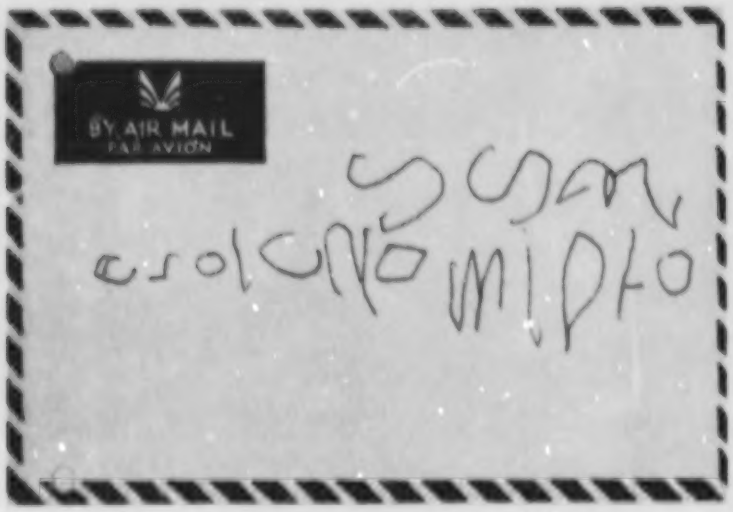
Lollipops, crisps and sweets

Cecilia's early written communication has been described in Chapter Three but at about the age of three years and nine months, coinciding with the more heightened interest in what

words 'say' she also became concerned with their precise representation. She started to ask 'How do I write?' and responded to the sounds indicated by scribing letters as accurately as possible. She seemed interested in correctness of presentation and thus repeated or crossed out letters that did not appear to match her mental perception, filling the space on paper, at times randomly, as well as in a left to right sequence. It is interesting to note that no spontaneous efforts until four years two months involved the copying of words, all her attempts being dependent on cognitive and perceptual memory. At this time however she observed the word 'SUE' written on the jumper of a child in a book illustration and copied it onto paper. The name was of significance to her as the name of an acquaintance but it is the first recorded incident of its kind to take place. Clay (in Clark and Glynn 1980), has remarked on the value of writing action as a way of learning to know words and this has been realised by Cecilia as she has come to appreciate through her own efforts her increasing competence. This was demonstrated one day as at tea-time she announced 'I can cut my own egg now 'cos I can write my name'. The following examples show some of the expertise achieved mainly before her fourth birthday in which she has been concerned with a variety of activity. First the addressing of an envelope which reads '10 Winton Close' (Fig. 15). The number ten occurs in the middle of the bottom line of writing and is followed by an inverted 'w'. There is insufficient space to conclude the word 'Winton' and the last letter 'n' is written to the left of the number. The letters of

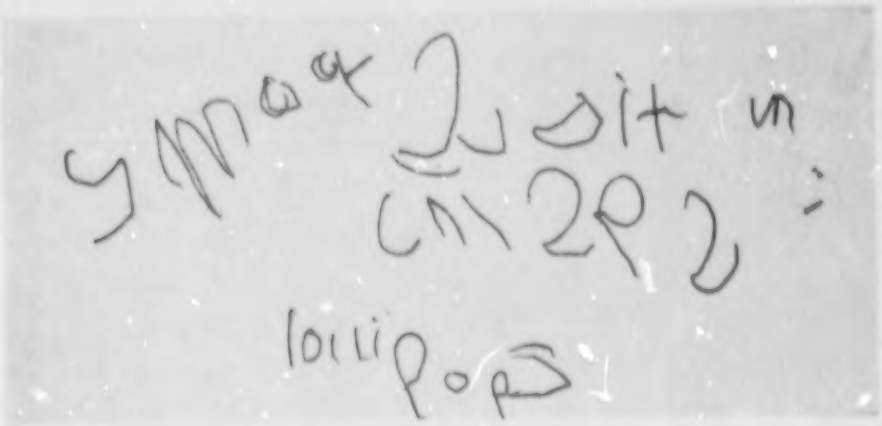
the word 'Close' then occur in a right to left sequence.

Figure 15 10 Winton Close



The next example (Fig. 16) is a shopping list compiled by Cecilia in preparation for her birthday party which includes lollipops, crisps and sweets. The 'w' of 'sweets' is inverted and the 'e's appear as 'c's a common occurrence in her early writing.

Figure 16 Shopping list - sweets, crisps, lollipops (C. 3-11)



In the third illustration the word 'house' is added to a picture by Cecilia as on her request I dictate the letter sounds of the word (Fig. 17) and finally Figure 18 provides examples of Cecilia's development towards the achievement of writing her own name, spanning a period of some nine months. It is additionally illustrative of other abilities such as motor control (Hildreth 1936).

That awareness of letter perception now exists is clear and the next point of concern is its relationship with the word as a whole. It is not certain whether in fact letters are discerned as individual entities or constitute for the child distinctive features of the word itself. Various researchers (e.g. Clay 1972) have commented on the significance of first and last letters and Marchbanks and Levin (1965) suggest that they provide the most salient cues for word recognition which in their findings is based on individual letters. Cecilia's interaction is thus examined in terms of this observation but with the realisation that such development composes an integral part of overall language growth.

References have already been made to both the child's individual letter and word recognition ability and it would seem probable that if theory concerning the importance of the first and last letter of a word is valid this would be naturally in evidence too. That it was became clear as Cecilia's participation in various situations was considered further. An early story reading episode for example revealed her capacity not only for

Figure 17 h-o-u-s-e (C. 3-11)

House. (Colours red, green, yellow).

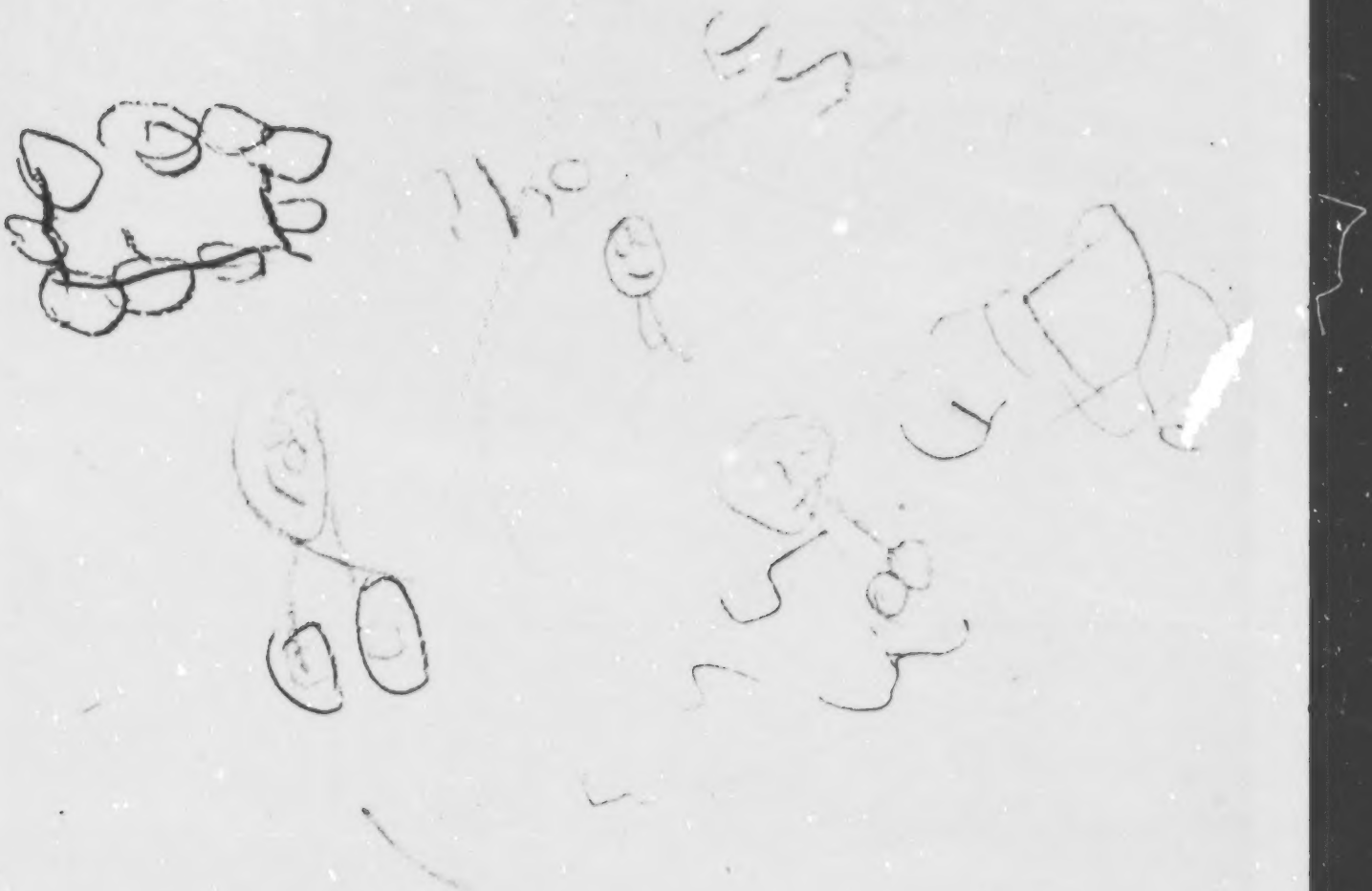


Figure 18 Development in Name Writing.

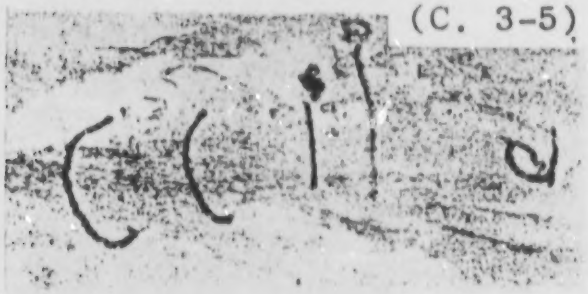
(C.3-4)

(C. 3-5)

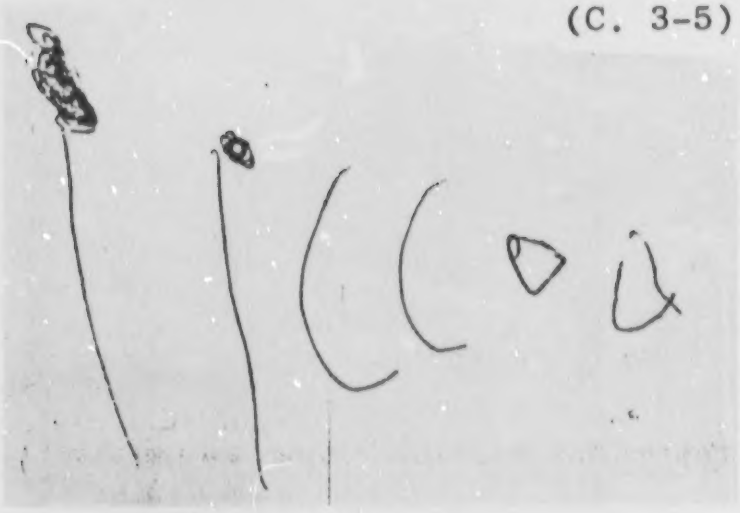
Fig. 18. Cont.

Development in name writing.

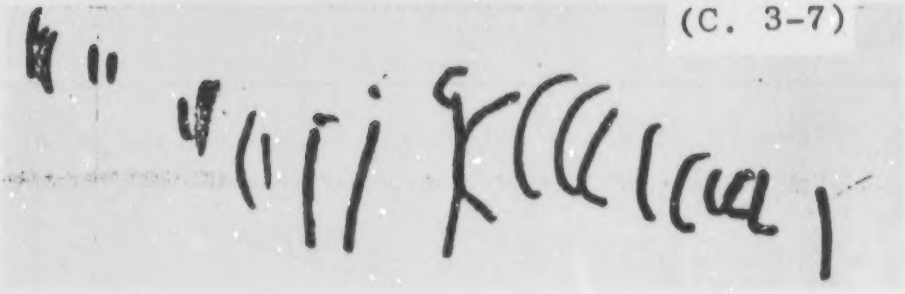
(C. 3-5)



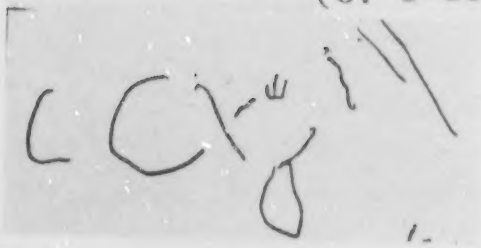
(C. 3-5)



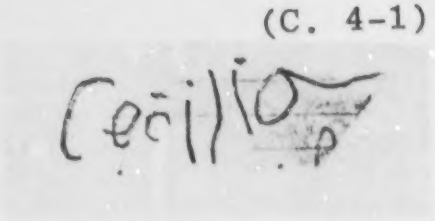
(C. 3-7)



(C. 3-10)



(C. 4-1)



letter identification, on this occasion the first letter, but for perceptual comparison with other word configurations not usually present. It begins with Cecilia picking up a book and whispering its title 'Four Pigs and a Bee'. I responded by asking 'How many pigs?' and as Cecilia replies it seems as if her attention is in fact absorbed in other matters. Her observations however soon become pertinent.

M.	How many pigs?
C. (3-3)	One, two, three letters. (Looks at 'p' of 'pigs' on the title page). It's like 'Peter'.
M.	It is.
C.	It's like 'p' for 'Pauline' too.
M.	Yes, this time it says 'pigs' doesn't it!

(Four Pigs and a Bee)
pub. Dinosaur 1978

Many other observations also revealed in various ways an awareness of first and last letters. On one occasion Cecilia (3-7) and I were going shopping and Cecilia remarked on the two 's's in Sainsburys. Although she was incorrect it is feasible that she was referring to the first and last letter. The following is also an interesting incident which additionally provides information regarding the child's auditory perception. Cecilia was eating an orange when she suddenly announced -

C. (3-10)	Orange, thats what starts with 'o'. (Makes an 'o' shape with her finger in space).
M.	Lots of other words start with that letter too .. 'on', 'off'. Do you know any?
C.	.... Window.

A further incident also provided some indication of the role contributed by auditory perception. In this instance the child appeared physically incapable of producing the sourds of the letter combination or could not hear them. Cecilia and her father were sharing a story when Cecilia questioned -

C. (3-2)	Who's that?
F.	That's Priscilla.
C.	Mm, wish I could be Briscilla.
F.	PRIScilla.
C.	I wish could be Briscilla.
F.	Pri.
C.	Briscilla.
F.	Not Bri, br. P. p. Priscilla.
C.	Wish I could be that name!

The Wind Blew pub. Picture Puffins 1978.

This view of the importance of the first and last letter of a word is only part of Marchbanks and Levin's research findings in which they generally conclude that specific letters and not the overall word shape forms the basis for recognition, that is, other letters may be important in the child's perception of word configuration. Cecilia in fact has made a number of observations indicating that other letters of a word are also generally being perused. As I sounded the words 'cheep' 'cheep' in one story for example Cecilia (3-4) remarked, that's like 'cheese' and as the word 'supper' in the story of John Brown, Rose and the Midnight Cat was read she observed 'That's like shopping 'cos it's got two 'p's). A further example revealed the actual word scanning process in operation even though it was a short word. Cecilia (3-3) identified the word 'zoo' and remarked 'That's got two 'o's and a zebra'. It appears from these illustrations that a certain perception of word as well as letter configuration is taking place, as suggested by other researchers (e.g. Rayner and

Hagelberg 1975), the letters identified by the child constituting the distinctive features. Although this is by no means conclusive the indications are as clear as those for individual letter perception.

The point now seems to have been reached in Cecilia's development in which it seems she has become slowly but progressively conscious of the features of print within the context of meaning. This aspect of context and time is all important and forms the final consideration in this chapter. The comments of Francis (1977) with respect to the learning of words, are pertinent.

> Children may vary in their rate of learning a basic store, but whether they be quick or slow this grasp is not independent of some knowledge of what written language amounts to, for the visual form of words must be invested with some meaning to be memorable. (p. 125)

She goes on to say that knowledge of a word in one context however is not necessarily indicative of its learning in another. These factors of both time and context were made clearer on two separate occasions recently in which Cecilia was interacting with print. On the first she was observed running her finger under the words on a box of soap flakes and saying 'soap-powder'. This was a reasonable supposition but remembering an incident with the same word, many months earlier, noted in Chapter Three, I responded, 'No, what does that word say?' It was a few seconds before the child replied appropriately and said 'Co-op'. The second incident involved a picture and word book about shapes. Cecilia was cursorily glancing through the book, looking at various geometric shapes, when she stopped at some printed words,

pointed to one and asked 'What does it say?' I replied 'Peter' and Cecilia continued looking for a while before putting the book aside. Although she had seen this word many times before this constituted a new context. The following day Cecilia returned to the book and as she came to the word she read it aloud. I asked 'How do you know that it says 'Peter'?' thinking she would say that she had been told, but she retorted 'Because it says P-e-t-e-r' spelling out the sounds of the word.

It is now emerging that internalisation of the complexities of print is an intricate and lengthy process in which this child has consistently initiated and sustained cognitive activity. As this is maintained and the potency of her strategies for learning continue to increase it may be expected that the natural progression towards the reading process itself will become even more obvious. It is this, as yet unrealised potential, that is examined next in relation to the demands of the skill.

CHAPTER SIX

You show me ..... and then I read it

The child's progression towards an awareness of the configuration of print within its potential to communicate meaningful concepts is now becoming more evident in Cecilia's observations and is considered in this chapter in terms of readiness for reading.

I begin with 'C'

Many aspects of the reading process have been explored extensively this century and findings have been diverse, but of particular interest in this setting are those related to the teaching of early reading skills. Two main propositions seem to have evolved which are of direct concern to discussion of Cecilia's growth as a user of language and a potential reader, that which regards reading as a process of translation in which printed symbols are decoded with respect to knowledge of phoneme-grapheme correspondences, and secondly that which considers reading as an autonomous language process (Resnick and Weaver 1979).

For many years the dominant approach to reading instruction has been the decoding method and it is currently maintained by some research to be the most advantageous one for some children (Resnick 1979). In this approach priority is given to knowledge of letters and groups of letters and their corresponding sounds and children are taught what symbols 'say'. The introduction to these and regular words is gradually extended through a phonics

curriculum encompassing exceptions to the rules thus allowing systematic expansion of vocabulary. Although this structured teaching emphasises processing of all the print on the page according to certain rules, it leads in principle to a fluency of reading and a grasp of meaning. The concern here is the point, if any, at which the child's spontaneous development naturally embraces its logic.

Cecilia's increasing awareness of letter formations has been discussed in the previous chapter, but as a pre-requisite to the decoding process it is now reviewed further. She has for a considerable time been aware of both some lower case and capital letters and this knowledge has been volunteered occasionally, both in the reading situation and as an outcome of other activity. The following examples support the evidence of earlier observations and demonstrate how accomplishments may be acquired and extended. The conversation of the first incident is generated as a result of her activity. As her father picked up a book and drew attention to the title, Cecilia began to trace around its letters with her finger. Her subsequent comments revealed not only letter knowledge but the beginnings of a proficiency for making perceptual comparisons.

F.	This is a good one, isn't it. What's this one called?
C. (3-8)	The Fat Cat.
F.	The Fat Cat.
C.	(traces around each letter with her finger)
F.	They both end with letter t. Fat, Cat. Whose name begins with a

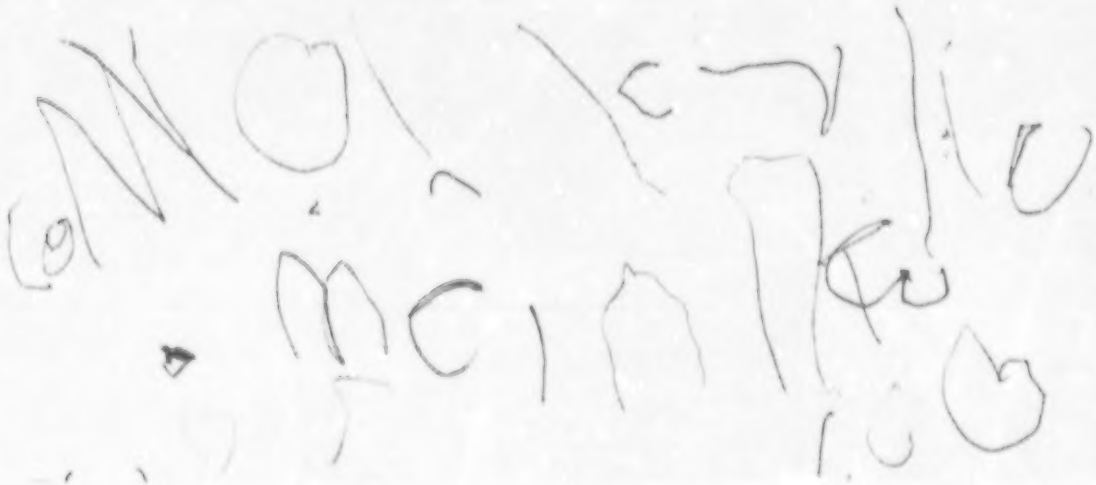
	letter T?
C.	Thomas.
F.	That's right, Thomas. (Reads). The Fat Cat.
C.	I begin with C.
F.	You begin with C like Carol does, Cecilia and cat. They sound rather different don't they but they use the same letter. (Points to title). Which letter have they both got as well .. They've both got a 't'. Which other letter have they both got?
C.	(points to 'a')
F.	Yes, what's that letter?
C.	Two 'a'.
F.	Two 'a's. Fat, Cat. They've both got 'a' and both got 't'.
C.	But that one's got Friday!

The next episode indicates more directly her ability to discriminate letters or rather lack of it. Cecilia and I are looking at a Pooh Quiz Book and as I read the question the child responds showing she has a grasp of directionality but lacks the facility at this time to distinguish between the 'u' and 'n' and 'g' and 'y'. This is considered a fairly common misjudgement amongst young children (Popp 1964; Lynn 1963).

M.	How does Pooh spell honey?
C. (3-10)	(points to answer)
M.	Yes. Can you say the letters?
C.	H-u-u-u .. um, 'g' at the end.

Her own writing also offers some indication of her present knowledge although it must be noted that the ability to perceive letters is not necessarily reflected in the power to reproduce them. Figure 19 shows the names of the family who are coming to visit that afternoon and represents her present letter awareness and capabilities for writing. Each sound was dictated by her

Figure 19 Carol, Leslie, Melanie, Oakey



father on request, the list reading Carol Leslie, Melanie; it was only when the 'k' of Oakey the dog was reached she pronounced 'I don't know that one' and gave up the activity.

Although Cecilia's letter knowledge as shown by both her writing and observations is as yet incomplete, it constitutes that obtained naturally as part of her language development. She herself has used situations to comment upon and expand her learning, feedback from others has allowed and encouraged accommodation.

Let's write cat

Once the letter sound relationships have been mastered the next step in the teaching of phonics is an introduction to the combination of sounds within words, the blend of consonants for example. The difficulties of letter by letter sounding out are well known and as Lieberman (in Resnick and Weaver 1979) points out 'no matter how fast the consecutive phonemes are spoken "kuh-

a-tuh" merged together consecutively will produce only the nonsense trisyllable "kuhatuh" and not the monosyllabic word 'cat'. Suggestions for overcoming this problem of the 'fusion of phonemes by co-articulation' are offered by Lieberman but of concern here is whether the child would ever in fact spontaneously come to examine words in this way. Rosner (in Resnick and Weaver 1979) described auditory analysis as 'those abilities that enable us to perceive spoken language as being made up of a finite collection of separate sounds that fit together (sequence) in a precise way' and as a function of maturity. This is now investigated in Cecilia's development.

Brief reference has already been made to auditory discrimination in Chapter Five but the first instance of what may be considered of particular relevance to the present context occurred one day as I was seated at the table writing. Cecilia (4-0) approached with pencil and paper in hand and said 'I know, let's write "cat".' She sat down and drew the letter 'C'. I was intrigued for as far as was known no attempt to write this word had been made previously and replied approvingly 'Mm. What comes next?' Cecilia responded with a 't' which she placed after the 'c'. Whether this incident demonstrates that the word is being auditorily perceived, the first and final consonant being the most readily distinguishable, or is the product of visual memory is unclear but it did alert me to the possibility of that development. The next day the following episode took place. Cecilia was observed studying the title of one of a series of

books about a little boy named Casper. She quietly sounded and fingered each letter of the word 'mouth' and this provoked the following exchange:-

C. (4-0)	m-o-u-t-h
M.	Mm. Lots of letters. What does that word say?
C.	Casper's teeth!

The child was centring on meaning presumably using the picture of Casper eating an apple as a contextual cue. Although on this occasion no attempt at sound letter correspondences was being made, or at least at the moment Cecilia was confronted with the question, this does not negate the possibility that further and more intensive consideration of words in this manner, as the interest arises, could at a future date promote some spontaneous realisation of their conformation as a sequence of letter-sound correspondences. (Forester 1977).

There were three bears

The fact that the child has highlighted 'meaning' in her perusal of a word now induces consideration of a contrasting approach to the teaching of reading in which the reader is concerned not with a decoding activity but primarily with the construction of meaning. Goodman (1970) and Smith (1971) both proponents of a psycholinguistic approach depict its essence as a prediction process. Goodman (1976-1977) writes:

> Three kinds of information are available to the reader. One kind the graphic information, reaches the reader visually. The other two, syntactic and semantic information are supplied by the reader as he begins to process the visual input. Since the reader's goal is meaning, he uses as much or as little of each kind of information as is necessary to get the meaning. He makes predictions of the grammatical structure using the

> control over language structure he learned when he learned oral language. He supplies semantic concepts to get the meaning from the structure. In turn his sense of syntactic structure and meaning make it possible to predict the graphic input so he is highly selective, sampling the print to confirm his prediction. In reading, what the reader thinks he sees is partly what he sees, but largely what he expects to see. (P.608)

The first points to be made concern syntax. As Cecilia has gradually but certainly acquired language proficiency she has naturally observed and come to practise the complexity of its structure. Although this is by no means fully understood its development has effectively allowed some predictive syntactical operations to function. Merritt (1969) described this ability with reference to reading as an 'intermediate skill' and affirms that though response to an individual word, as to the spoken word, is a first requirement, the very beginnings of which has been noted in Cecilia's development in Chapter Five, the skills of anticipation and prediction constitute the real essence of the process. He referred to these competences in terms of a knowledge of sequences and the following examples of the child's participation in the story reading situation demonstrate something of their effect. In each case Cecilia correctly predicts a word or phrase anticipating the text.

The first incident is a typical example of interaction in a story which the child particularly enjoyed. She anticipated the text contributing the actual word or phrases in response to my reading.

M. (reads)	Heidi was a little girl who had no father or mother. She was looked after by her Aunt
C. (3-2)	Dete.
M.	One day Aunt Dete said "Come on Heidi. We are going up the
C.	mountain."
M.	They put all Heidi's things in a bag and
C.	Off they went.

(Heidi)
pub. Ladybird Books. 1979.

In the second extract the child again precisely responded to the text's grammatical structure which naturally assisted the determination of the word form.

M. (reads)	In the ceiling was a jaggy hole. Through the hole was a tree. The roots of the tree hung over the table, spread with meal one. There was a loud sucking gobbling noise One root sucked boiled egg up, one sucked cornflakes, one was in the teapot. One munched bread and
C. (3-2)	butter
M.	One slurped noisily in the tall milkjug, One twisted about in the red
C.	jam.
M.	One was trying to swallow the salt but kept coughing and
C.	choking.

Meal One
pub. Pan Books Ltd 1976

The third example shows in addition to the successful prediction of words, the substitution of the single word 'cottage' for a phrase, a little house in the wood.' Noticeably however, suitable grammatical structure and meaning is sustained (Goodman 1969).

M. (reads)	Once upon a time there were three bears.
C. (3-2)	bears
M.	Who lived in a little
C.	cottage

M. a little house in the wood. Father bear was a very
C. big bear
M. Mother bear was a
C. medium sized bear
M. Baby bear was just a
C. little tiny bear.

The Three Bears
Ladybird Publications. 1971.

It is this ability to supply an appropriately semantic component which raises the next issue, that of semantic information.

Happily ever after

The theorists of this psycholinguistic approach to reading suggest that it is the reader who generates the meaning of the text, or in this instance the listener, who constructs the meaning of the spoken word. Of particular interest here is the means by which this may happen.

It is evident from naturalistic observations that this young child is constantly and actively engaged in exploring the environment and in so doing is acquiring and accommodating new knowledge which she inevitably must bring to a reading setting, but worthy of particular note in this context is the way in which comprehension is assisted during the story reading itself. Chapter Four has drawn attention to the very pertinent questioning that typically takes place which elicits some of the necessary information for understanding the story. The following episode provides another example of how the child utilises those additional moments afforded by the one to one situation, which allow fresh insights to be explored. The reading is from The

Little Red Engine Goes to Market which describes the excitement of market day for the engine as at each station it slows to pick up an extra load. Cecilia listened carefully until the geese were mentioned when her observations regarding the word 'hiss' lead to a conversation in which her current ideas demanded adjustment.

M. (reads)	And the geese poked their long necks between the bars of the crate 'Hisssss. Hisssss.'
C. (3-11)	Snakes go hiss.
M.	They do, don't they, and these geese hiss too .. Do you know what geese are like?
C.	I seen some.
M.	Where did you see some?
C.	Not in Alison's farm. (Reference to a visit she had previously made).
M.	Not in Alison's farm.
C.	But I might have done.
M.	Mm. What do they look like?
C.	Er, they goats.
M.	Goats? No they're not like goats. They're like ducks, a bit like ducks.
C.	Um .. feathers.
M.	They have feathers and quite long necks, that's right.

(The Little Red Engine Goes to Market in
Tell Me a Story
pub. Puffin Books 1962

Sometimes through discussion the child is also able to indicate more explicitly what she has actually comprehended of the story which enables a further understanding of her development. One day after the Three Little Pigs was completed for example I asked 'Did you like that story?' Cecilia in her attempt to explain that she did, and would like to play-act its adventures gets involved in the following exposition.

C. (3-11)	Yeh, but I would like to one day, if a wolf comes and he blows very hardly and he's tired. Well, well um might and we're we're have to run away, right, and hide in the forest?
M.	Mm.
C.	And then we see a man, carrying straw.
M.	Mm.
C.	And then we make our house and the big bad wolf comes, and "I'll blow and blow and blow your house down," he'll say won' he?
M.	Mm.
C.	And he, and the next one was twigs weren't it?
M.	Mm.
C.	And the man gave them some twigs and er and give us some twigs and we make our house and then the brick one.
M.	That's right.
C.	And then 'e'll give us some bricks and we make that one and, he might get tired and, and me and daddy and you might live happily ever after.

That certain syntactic and semantic skills are being acquired by the child is apparent from the examples but what is still unclear is how comprehension is actually achieved when the child approaches the text alone. Merritt (1977) provides some insight at this point when he likened the child coming to print in which only a few words are familiar, to the adult's contact with the following passage.

> 'The zobins are usually vimbole - like most rengles. They often evimber, but not many of them do so in grent. Those that do are naturally estingled.' (p. 20)

He suggested that it is possible to attain a considerable level of comprehension, in this instance about the nature of zobins and what they do in a similar manner to which the child gains an understanding of story text, by using linguistic ability to

manipulate words.

Although this viewpoint regarding reading seems to exist in conflict with that of reading as a decoding process, Chall (1977) suggests that in reality the main point of contention between 'the competing positions on the nature of reading' is the degree of emphasis on code and the stage at which it should be taught. Cecilia (4-1) for instance confused 'dolly' and 'dog'. Chall argues for a scheme through which individuals progress by interacting with their environment doing "different" things in relation to printed matter at each stage. Cecilia's growth in this direction has already been observed and she has attained many of the prereading requirements described by Chall. Whether the qualitative change in response to print which marks the next stage will be achieved as naturally, before formal schooling begins, remains to be seen but what is clear is that if her present strategies for seeking new insights are maintained and developed as they have been previously, this is a real possibility. Her request (4-0) as she picked up the story of the Little Red Hen, 'Mum, you show me how to read the words and then I read it' is perhaps another step in the right direction. What must be remembered are the words of the Bullock Report (H.M.S.O. 1975) 'There is no one method, medium, approach, device, or philosophy that holds the key to the process of learning to read' (p.77).

Cecilia, as an individual, must devise her own.

CHAPTER SEVEN

POSTSCRIPT

A year or more has lapsed since the above recordings were completed and Cecilia (5-1) is now a fluent reader. She enjoys both independent silent reading and reading as a shared activity with her parents, other children and adults. Although this achievement did not take place spontaneously, before the advent of formal schooling, or the introduction to structured reading programmes, it does seem likely from observations that its realisation was influenced by those cognitive strategies developed by the child herself in earlier experiences and which have since maintained their potency. She continues for example to hypothesise, to test her comprehension of events, to analyse. The following discussion constitutes a final comment on Cecilia's activity as she increases her competence for literacy. It refers to oral language development, writing and the reading process itself.

This is a wondrous place

Earlier consideration of Cecilia's development related to oral language acquisition and this is still perceived as an important area of growth, not only for the purpose of improving skills for penetrating the language intention of others and articulating personal thoughts but for increasing the sensitivity towards words themselves. Durkin (1983) notes that, although around the age of five years has not been the focus for language

acquisition research, a substantial amount of evidence does exist regarding continuing developments, syntactical, semantic and metalinguistic for instance, and these are important.

Cecilia in her activities approaching this age has increasingly involved herself in discussion and explanations thus improving her own clarity and powers of expression (Fig.20). She has continued to question the meaning of unfamiliar words, in this way developing her vocabulary and understanding of events, for instance, 'What means adult?' 'What means antiques?' 'What means mood?' (4-2) and to experiment with words. On one occasion for example, when we were out exploring the woods, fields and streams near to our new home she called out to her father and me with excitement 'This is a wondrous place' (4-5).

Similarly Cecilia has persisted in questioning about print both in the environment 'What means 'No track laying vehicles'?' 'What means 'Permit Holders Only'?' and also the print of books and papers. A copy of the Times Educational Supplement was lying on the couch one day when Cecilia (4-5) chose to examine it. She picked it up, 'studied' the front page and pointed randomly to three words demanding, 'What does that say?' The words 'power', 'court' and 'confirm' were read to her and she pronounced 'It's boring this paper!'

Around the age of four years four months the interest in words expanded to include 'games'. She puzzled me one morning by shuffling her feet and repeating the 'f' sound. I was made aware

Figure 20 Little girl with roller skates on.

(C. 4-4)

She's got yellow round eyes
and I coloured them orange
and um a green round face
and I didn't colour it but
just left it white... and
a red body, oblong shape
and two black shoulders and
round red feet and I coloured
them blue and red roller
skates but I coloured them
yellow.
(original in colour)

of her intention quite soon however as she directed 'You tell me the word'. This was followed by another example, the shaking of her hands and the 'h' sound. Whether this exercise was an original activity or one enjoyed on a prior occasion in the nursery class is uncertain but it is of significance in this context as constituting a learning event initiated by the child herself. She had created the opportunity to test, reinforce, amend and extend her knowledge of letters and words. It is this kind of linguistic curiosity that is regarded as fundamental to language growth.

This is a cat

The child's reciprocal interest in 'reading' and writing words was recorded in Chapter Five but it now evolves as a concern that has retained it's potency for literacy growth. Cecilia has persisted in questioning 'How do I write?' and in experimenting with letters and words (Figs. 21a, b and c).

From about the age of four years and ten months when Cecilia had experienced formal schooling for nearly six months, her increased proficiency in writing was more clearly discernible. The activity seemed to be part of the established 'routine' at school but from time to time at home she sat down quite spontaneously to write 'stories' and record events and happenings. Often these sessions were lengthy undertakings during which she would display concentration and perseverance, time and time again asking 'How do you spell .....?' She was determinedly attentive to letters as they were sounded out for her and sometimes challenged a

Figure 21a I can do lots of 'w's. (C. 4-5)

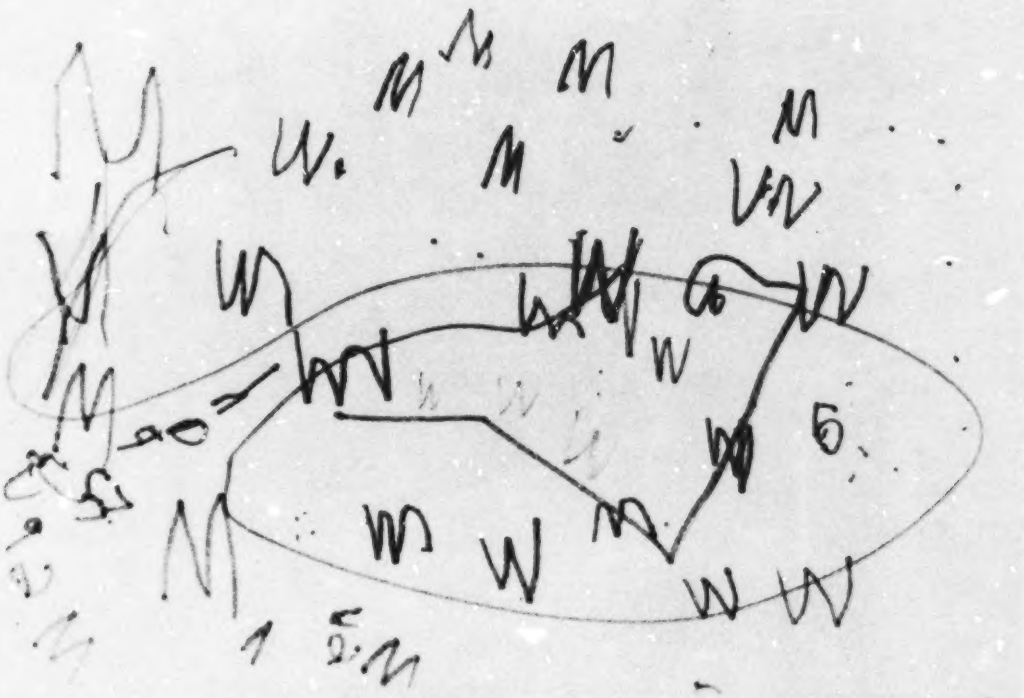


Figure 21b A letter to Alison. (C. 4-5)

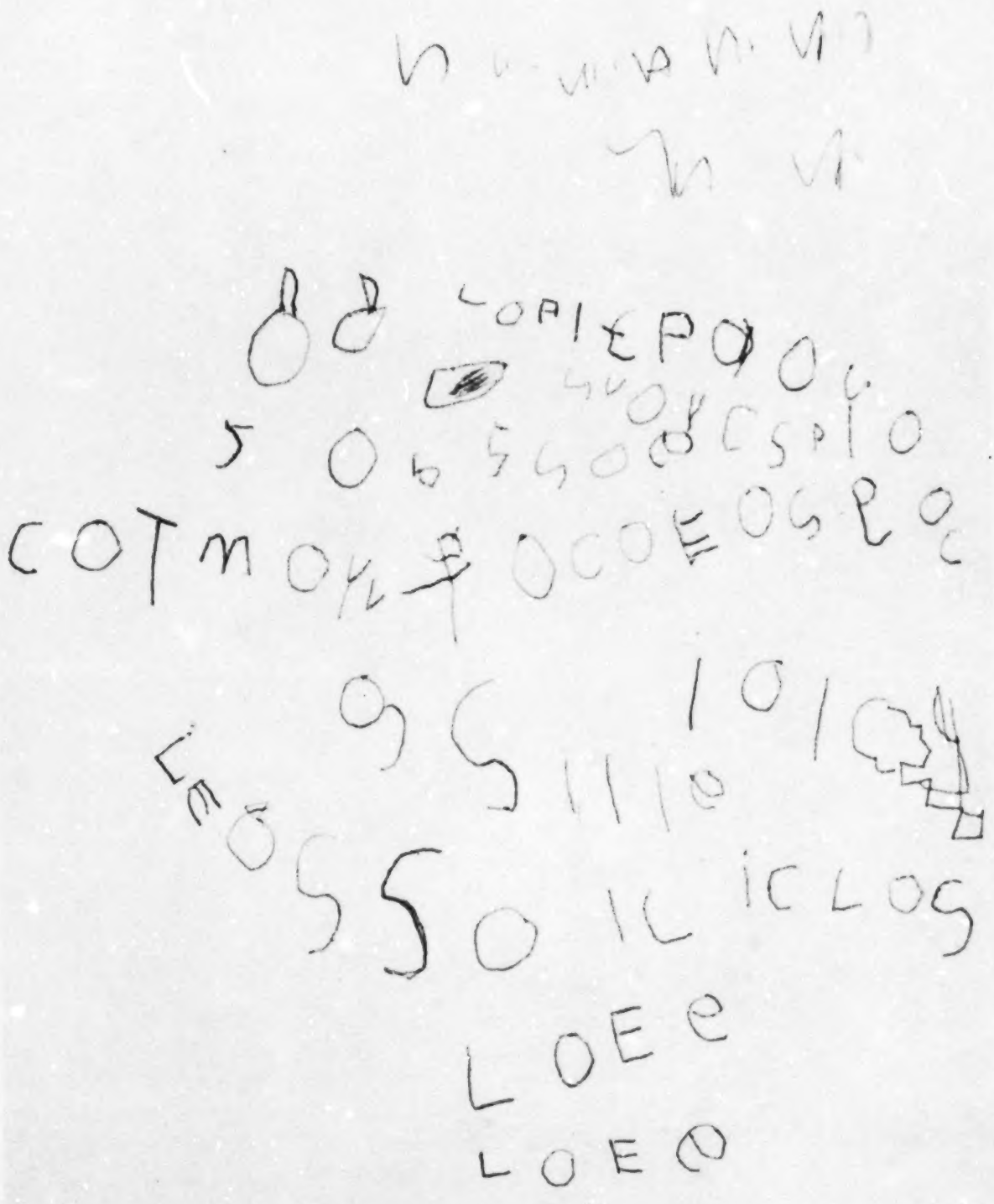


Figure 21c How do you write 'This is my house'?

(C. 4-5) (Original in colour).

response. Once for example she announced with annoyance, 'No, I said 'f' not 't.h.' (Fig. 22) is a story that was started one evening before bedtime. It reads, 'Once lived a butterfly. Once he went out for a walk. Then he saw a big castle. Then he thought I will go into that big castle so he did. But as he was going to open the door ...' She constructed the words 'a', 'he', 'went', 'big', 'saw', 'then', 'I', 'go in', and 'to' from memory but asked about the spellings of all the other words. Each time she completed a word she returned to the beginning of the story and quietly re-read it through to herself before attempting more writing. Those words which had been queried but which required repetition were searched out and copied without further comment.

Two more examples of her facility with the written word are also provided. The first one, (Fig. 23) is a picture to which she spontaneously added the description 'This is a cat' and the second (Fig. 24) is her note about the proposed events of the day. It provides an indication of spellings that are familiar to her and correctly recorded (is, we, to), those which she attempted to analyse for herself (goin, wakk, haf) and those about which she felt uncertain and questioned (long, hills).

The last illustration of her writing (Fig. 25) is one in which Cecilia reverts to a former well-tried means of communication, a page with line after line of letters.

Figure 22 Once lived a Butterfly.
(C.4-11)

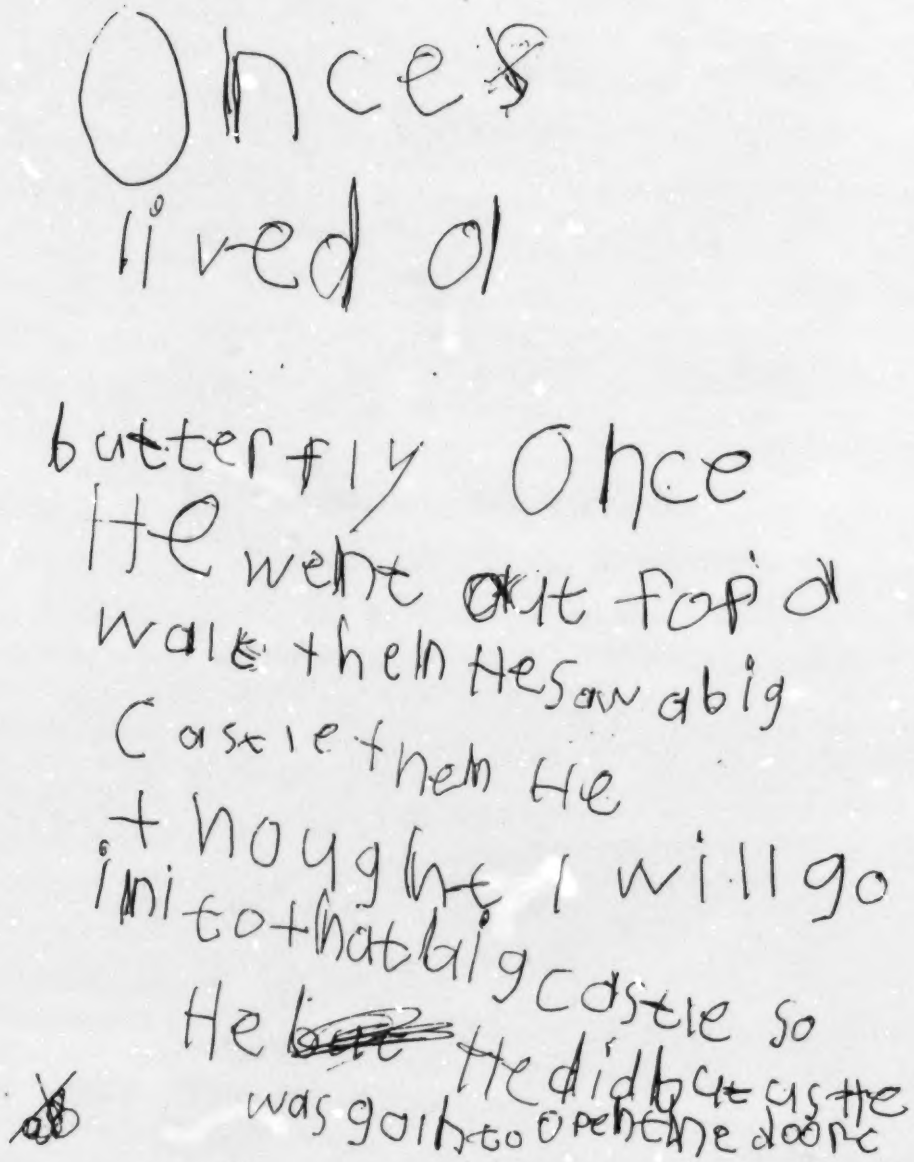

Onces
lived a
butterfly Once
He went out for a
walk then He saw a big
Castle then He
thought I will go
in to that big castle so
He He did he as the
was going to open the door

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Figure 23 This is a cat. (C. 4-10)

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Figure 24 Events of the day. (C. 4-11)

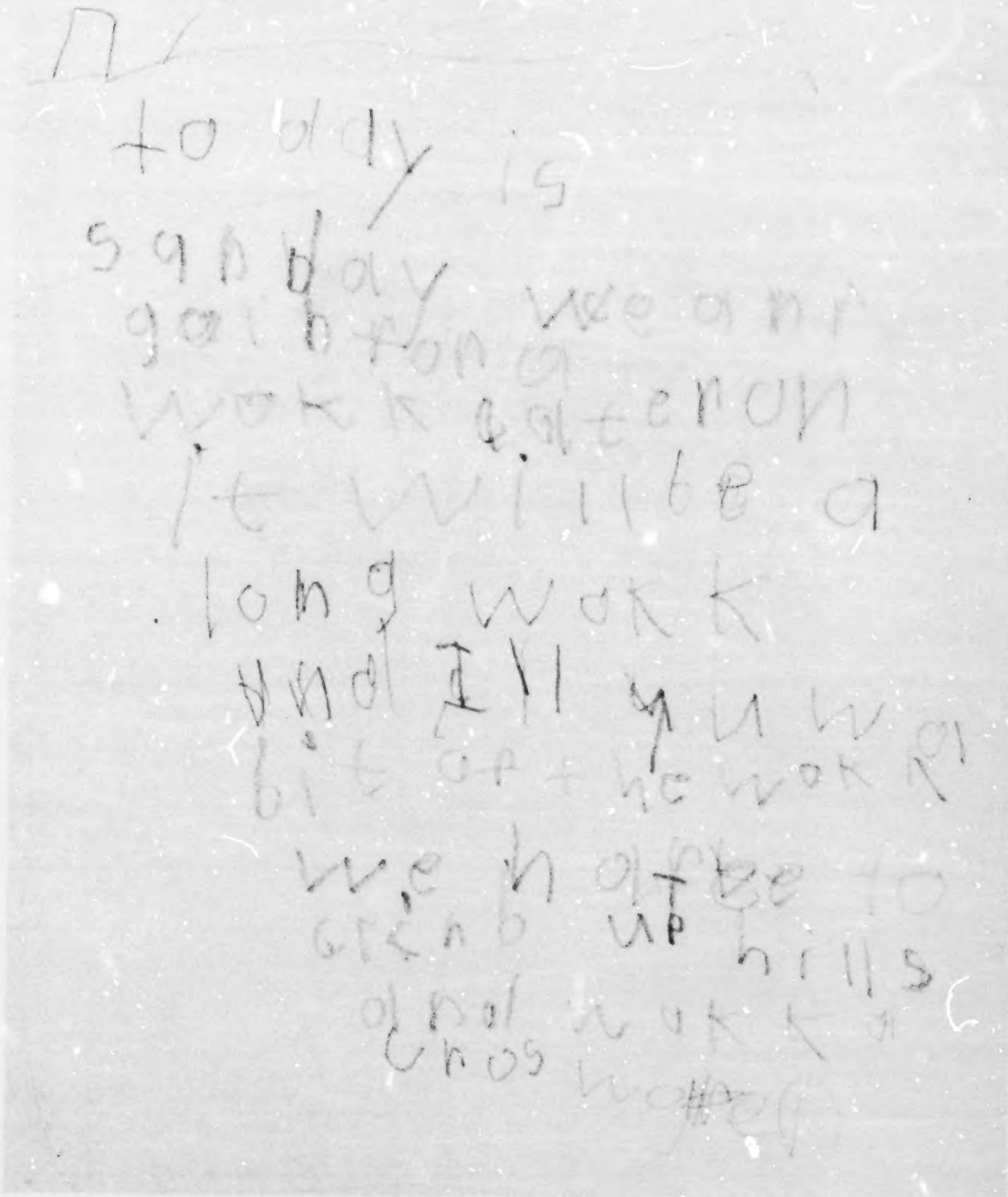
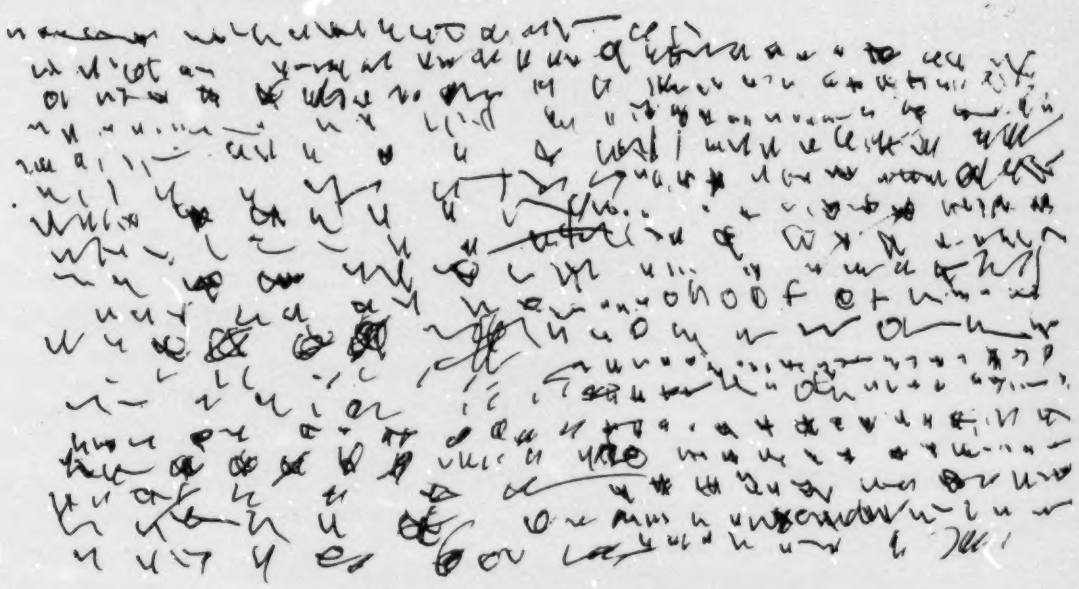


Figure 25. A written communication. (C. 5-0)



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She appears to need to get a message across quickly and resorts to a known course. Although this method was not perceived as demanding the diligent attention to words exhibited in the above recordings it nevertheless required concentration and effort. It is these personal qualities which have supported her attempts at writing and which have been perceived as strengthening the outcome of an activity which can only increase an understanding of the way of words.

A language for life

Observations of Cecilia's activity in varied language situations have affirmed the significance of her role in learning situations. She has questioned, considered and accommodated information. These cognitive strategies are also in evidence in the reading situation itself.

Cecilia entered the infant class of a small village school for morning sessions at the age of four years and four months and was soon introduced to a variety of preliminary readers. She brought books home and reading hence became an experience shared by home and school. It is not the beginning reading responses to instruction i.e. memorisation of key words and pages of text however that appear of particular interest in this context but the more detailed attention to the individuality of words which was observed some three to four weeks later. This heightened perception of written language which encompassed the increased fascination with letter writing and identification of signs and

notices already described was encouraged by the persistence of those cognitive strategies rooted in earlier development. Cecilia questioned and evaluated information, she hypothesised and allowed ensuing discussion to modify her interpretation. The following interaction, quoted from a story reading shared by Cecilia and me demonstrates the functioning of these strategies. The book, The Adventures of King Rollo is written in comic book style and four particular incidents are recorded.

C. (4-11) (reads) One day King Rollo visited the shoe shop. He bought himself a new pair of shoes. Of course, he already had shoes. Kings have lots of shoes. Lots and lots and lots of shoes. But King Rollo's new shoes were different. His new shoes had laces. King Rollo smiled and put on his new shoes. 'Do them up for me, please' he said to the magician.

(Reads straight across to the next page).

'A waste of magic.' What does that say? Three I's. (Indicates the word 'I'll').

(The sentence that follows is 'I'll show you how to do them up').

This interruption provides the opportunity to remark on the story and to indicate the sequencing of episodes. Cecilia continues reading the story with some help and finishes the page. She turns to the next page and studies it ...

C. Um. What is s, o, o, n?
M. Soon.
C. (reads) Soon strange noises came from the room. Left over right and under and BANG.
M. (corrects) BLOW.
C. BLOW. Why does it say that?

After some discussion the story is continued. Cecilia hesitates as the word 'Later' is reached and I helped her.

M.		Later
C.	(reads)	Later the noises were much ...
M.	(whispers)	Quieter.
C.		Where? It isn't, it isn't, a 'qu', (whispers) a 'p'.
M.		It isn't what?
C.		It isn't a 'qu', it's a 'p'.

Debate regarding 'qu' and 'Qu' and 'p' followed. We went on with the story. Cecilia read ...

C.		The cook took her to King Rollo's room just as he came out. "On."
M.		Oh
C.		Oh
M.		That's a 'h', it's not a 'n'. Oh.
C.	(reads)	"Oh," said Queen Gwen. "I do like your new shoes. There'll, there'll lace ups."
M.		Mm.
C.	(points to page)	What's that for?
M.		That little mark there? That's called an apostrophe.
C.		No that. There.
M.	(still unsure what is intended but thinking the comment is perhaps related to the inverted commas, reads on)	"Yes."
C.		No, I pointed to that 'r' and 'e'.

(The Adventures of King Rollo)
pub. Arrow Books 1982

The word in question was 'they're'. It had been read as there'll and had obviously not made sense. Cecilia's participation in this reading situation is typical of other sessions. She is active in reaching meaning and promoting her own learning.

The final quotation is a reading from the book Grandmother Lucy goes on a Picnic and illustrates just one further important strategy in operation, self correction, the 'Which' is amended to 'Watch' so that sense is made. Cecilia climbs onto her father's

knee to read to him, a story, which on many previous occasions had been read to her.

C. (5-1) (reads) I left Grandmother to see what I could find. I found little flowers all around, and sticks to throw in the water and holes in the green bank, and I thought that one day I would catch a butterfly for grandmother's garden.

Then we threw pebbles into the water and I listened to the noise. They made a clear plop and sent ripples to the bank. Grandmother Lucy said 'Which, Watch me' and she made the flattest stones dance across the water. I couldn't make stones do that but my Grandmother could do all kinds of exciting things.

(Grandmother Lucy Goes on a Picnic) pub. W. Collins Sons & Co. Ltd. 1970

Although this book presented certain challenges to Cecilia's present skills, these were withstood and the reading was a shared pleasure. It is perhaps this sharing in the excitement of language with others that has most assisted Cecilia's own cognitive operations in growth towards literacy. In any event the foundations of a 'language for life' have been laid.

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